

Tuesday April 28 1998

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The Guardian

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

One year on

The Tories still out in the cold

G2 with European weather



The war of words over an Irish heroine

Veronica Guerin: saint or sinner?

Women, G2 pages 4/5



Education, education, education...

Has Labour stuck to its pledges?

Education, G2 pages 12/13

Cancer 'key gene discovery'

Scientists foresee preventative pill

Tim Radford
Science Editor

SCIENTISTS who identified a single gene that protects against cancerous chemicals said last night that a cancer prevention pill could be undergoing trials within a decade.

The team's research found that a single gene may determine whether a smoker develops lung cancer. In a major breakthrough, the scientists have demonstrated that the gene provides vital defence against the toxic chemicals found in tobacco smoke.

Roland Wolf, the professor who led the team of Scottish scientists from Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh, said: "This is a very exciting finding. It's long been known that our bodies contain factors which determine our sensitivity to cancer-causing chemicals."

"Now we've shown for the first time that a single gene could be profoundly important in protecting us against cancer. That's good news, because it's easier to manipulate one gene than many."

Ken Brown at the Cancer Research Campaign's Beatson Laboratories in Glasgow, who also worked on the project, said: "It's a very important discovery, because it means that in the future scientists could potentially use genetic engineering to prevent certain cancers."

The breakthrough — another piece in the huge jigsaw puzzle of cancer — was made by testing carcinogenic chemicals on the skins of mice. These mice that lacked a particular gene developed three times as many precancerous tumours as those with the gene.

The chemicals were polycyclic hydrocarbons, the agents in cigarette smoke most closely linked with lung cancer.

'It's a very important discovery. It means in the future scientists could potentially use genetic engineering to prevent certain cancers'

Cancer Research Campaign scientist

Cancer is the second biggest killer in the developed world, after heart disease. One person in three in Britain will develop cancer, and one in four will die of it. Lung cancer causes the most deaths: there are 42,000 new cases in Britain alone each year, and 36,600 deaths. The biggest single cause of lung cancer is tobacco smoke.

The latest discovery is a new twist in the long battle against an old enemy. For decades researchers have concentrated on the faulty machinery that makes a cell decide to multiply and live forever — to become tumorous.

But the team led by Prof Wolf, who heads the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's laboratory at Ninewells Medical School in Dundee, looked at the other half of the problem: how cells interact with the environment around them. The group's cautiously titled paper, published today in the United States in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, offers a pointer to a new strategy.

"I would hope that we could have a serious programme, at least in the future, of cancer chemoprevention, by manipulating these types of genes specifically, in the next 10 years," said Prof Wolf. "I guess you might take it like you take a vitamin pill."

This hope rests on an understanding of the fine detail of evolution. Humans are exposed to potentially toxic chemicals all the time but most people live long enough to raise children. So the calls that would otherwise become cancerous must make enzymes which, for a few decades, "detoxify" the agents of death.

The trick has been to identify which of the 100,000 or so genes in the human DNA actually act as first-aid agents — and how they work with each other. The Scottish scientists have shown for the first time that just one gene — which makes an enzyme called glutathione S-transferase — was crucial in protection against cancer.

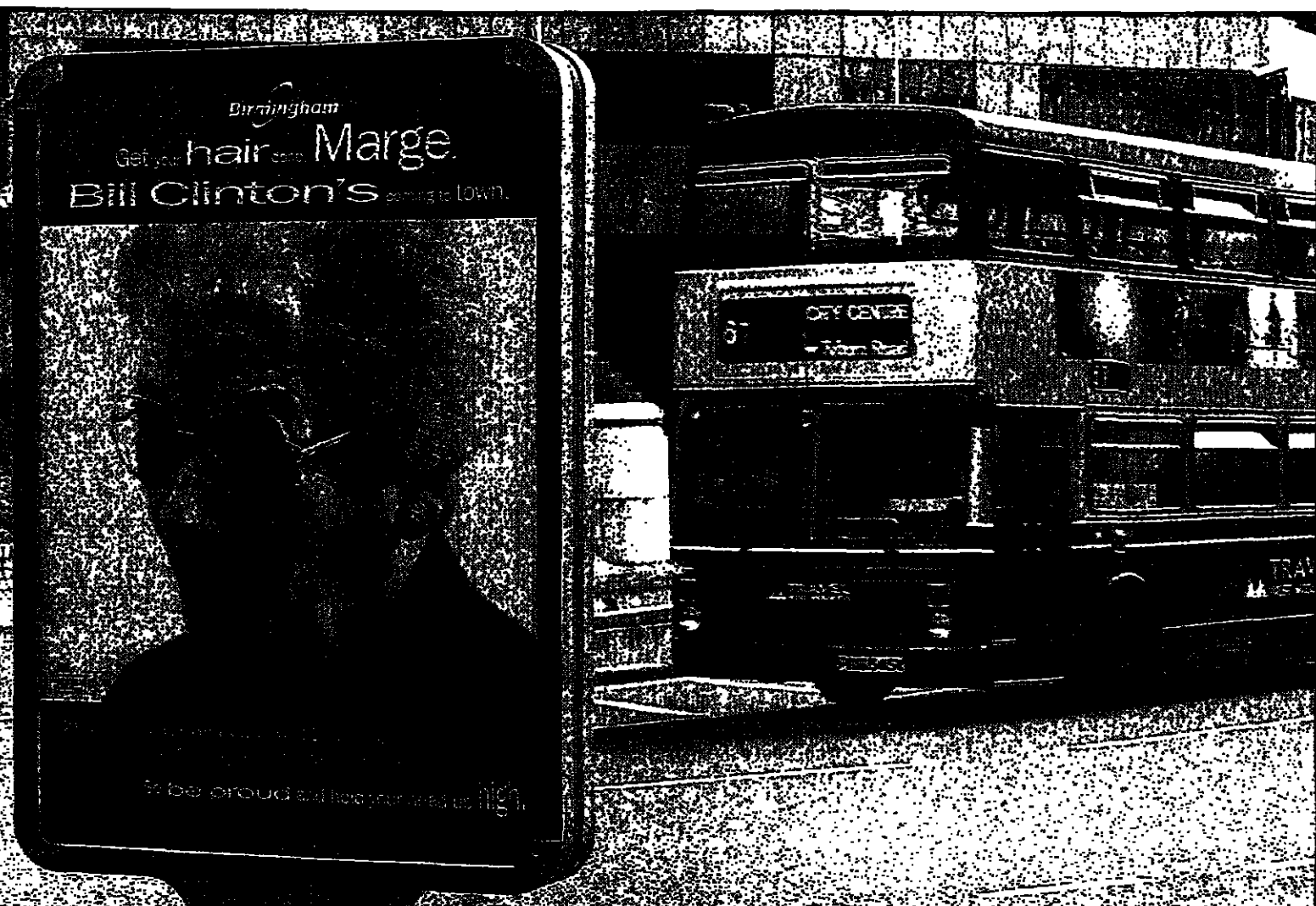
The Imperial Cancer Research Fund's director, Paul Nurse, pointed out last night that the gene would exist in a number of forms: protection against cancerous agents would depend not just on whether a human had the gene, but on which form the gene took. A lot more costly research would be necessary.

"We are talking about mice, and we are talking about the induction of precancerous growths on skin which have been induced by chemicals. It would need to be shown to be relevant to humans," said Professor Nurse. "At this moment it is all too early to say. If it all panned out it may also mean that if you could promote this enzyme, it might be a chemopreventer."

Cancer takes many forms, and huge teams of scientists have been working on a whole suite of possible approaches to treatment. No one expects that any one treatment will work in all cases. But the discovery of an precise anticancer gene offers new understanding.

Prof Wolf said: "One very important outcome of this understanding could be a means of cancer prevention which relies on manipulating the amount of these protective enzymes inside cells. In effect, you'd be switching on the natural defence system against toxic agents."

Meet the Potters (Marge and Albert), Bill Clinton's big date in Birmingham



One of the hundreds of posters around the city which have made Marge Potter into the face of Birmingham

PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE SEWELL

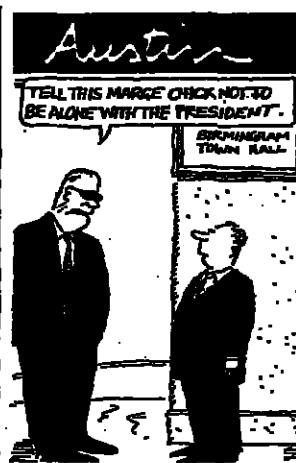
Peter Hetherington

WHEN Bill Clinton arrives in Birmingham next month for the G8 summit of the world's leading industrial nations, the official welcoming party — Prime Minister, royalty, Foreign Secretary, Lord Mayor — will be eclipsed by a pensioner.

Rather than filling the opening ceremony on May 15 with the usual great and good, the city council — effective hosts on behalf of the Government — has decided to give pride of place to Marge Potter, her husband Albert, and eight other ordinary Brummies.

They all feature in a £30,000 advertising campaign, "Birmingham Welcomes the World" against a background of a smiling globe, which highlights 67 people who have made the city the slogan: "Get Your Hair Done Marge, Bill Clinton's coming to town".

In England's second city, where the summit is



regarded as the greatest event in living memory, Marge has achieved such cult status that she is being put forward by councillors as the most suitable person to greet the world's most powerful man.

"She is truly representative of the city and of Britain, someone who generates a lot of warmth and sincerity," a council

spokesman said. For her part, Marge, a retired receptionist who has two sons in their 30s, is proud to represent a city which once marked itself as the "big heart of Britain."

"Fame at last at my age," she said last night. "It's absolutely wonderful, and it has given me a new lease of life. I would like to tell the President how proud we are to have him and to say 'Wonderful to see you, Mr President'."

She is unperturbed by the sexual allegations against Mr Clinton. "Everyone is innocent until proved guilty — that's all I would say about that. I think he's a lovely, charming man, and a brilliant statesman."

In the advertising campaign, Marge, who has only been abroad once — on a day trip to France — features on 350 hoardings alongside other Brummies — young, old, Asian, black and white, as representatives of a multi-cultural city. Another poster, showing a 30-year-old man with his four-year-old son on his

shoulders, screams: "Walk tall, Dave, this year we are head and shoulders above any city."

Beside a smiling Sikh, a third says: "Spread the word, Zahir, Birmingham's the hottest place to be in 1998."

The campaign also exploits the Eurovision song contest in the city on May 8. This features Tara, the 20 something on another hoarding: "The French, the Spanish, the Greeks — who do you fancy, Tara?" As a result Tara has just featured as a Page 3 girl in the

Sun. "But this hasn't detracted from the overall campaign," insisted Michael Higgins, deputy editor of the Birmingham Post. "It has been highly successful, and Marge has certainly become very well known."

Birmingham city council said the aim had been to portray ordinary people rather than headline-grabbers.

An estimated 11,000 visitors from the G8 countries will be attending the event in the city's International Convention Centre.



LABOUR'S FIRST YEAR

'It was not difficult to find people who looked like Tories, and indeed had been Tories. It was difficult to find people who still were.'

Matthew Engel goes to Wimbledon, where lifelong Conservatives are warning to New Labour.

Mary Bell memoir shows lack of remorse

'Powerful' autobiography insists she was not solely to blame

Luke Harding

UNPUBLISHED writings by the child killer Mary Bell reveal she shows only qualified remorse for her crimes, the Guardian has learned.

In her draft autobiography Bell admits that she was to blame for the death of four-year-old Martin Brown, it is understood. But she rejects the suggestion that she was solely responsible for the killing of three-year-old Brian Howe, whom she strangled, dumping his body on waste ground. In 1968 Bell was found guilty of the manslaughter of both boys but her

friend Norma Bell, also charged with the murders, was acquitted.

"I was surprised there was not more remorse," one publisher, who has read the manuscript, said yesterday. He added: "Her autobiography is powerful, fascinating and well-written."

The revelation that Bell is aggrieved at being solely blamed for Brian Howe's death follows the disclosure by the Guardian on Saturday that she has been paid more than £50,000 to collaborate on a book about her life.

Its author, the distinguished investigative journalist Gitta Sereny, has dismissed the figure of £50,000, but has

admitted paying Bell. Tony Blair has instructed the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to look at ways to prevent criminals from profiting through books on their lives.

Bell's "beautifully written" autobiography, *Life Without Life*, circulated among publishers in the late 1980s but was turned down on the grounds that it would cause offence to the families of her victims. The manuscript includes an account of her escape from an open prison in 1977, when she spent 48 hours on the run at a seaside resort. She was then recaptured. *Life Without Life* ends with Bell's release in 1980, aged 23. It is not clear how much of the material is taken up by Gitta Sereny in her book.

At their original trial at Newcastle Assizes, Norma

Bell — no relation — and Mary Bell blamed each other for the death of Brian Howe. At an early stage in the police inquiry Norma, then 13, confessed, implicating Mary, 11, who received a life sentence.

Both girls agreed that they had led Brian Howe and his dog Lassie to an area of waste ground known as Tin Lizzie, near their homes in Scotland, a working-class area west of Newcastle. But the jury convicted Mary Bell alone, after Norma graphically described how Mary had strangled Brian and then used a Gillette razor blade to carve initials on his stomach.

"Mary knelt down and she got her hand on his neck and Brian tried to shift away from her," she told the court.

Tracked down by a newspaper, Norma Bell, now 43, yesterday described herself as

"livid" but "not surprised" about the book. "Mary was such a clever little thing. I bet she wants to grab the money and move abroad, where nobody knows her," she said.

Peter Stothard, editor of the *Times*, which is serialising Ms Sereny's book, Cries Unheard, from Saturday, yesterday defended the payment to Bell. "If Gitta Sereny decided to get that book written she had to make some kind of payment to a woman who as an 11-year-old girl 30 years ago committed two manslaughter, then that is a payment I certainly back. It was not a hasty decision."

"It was a very carefully made decision by someone who has greater experience of working on those issues than

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Sketch

Floating on heady clouds of jargon



Simon Hoggart

THE white paper is clear, comprehensible and does not sensationalise, said Simon Hoggart, the Liberal Democrat spokesman.

He could say that again. The new white paper on drugs is, I think, the least sensational document I have ever read. Indeed, as I browsed through it, a drowsy numbness pained my senses, as though of a large split I had partaken. My pupils dilated and I discovered an obsessive interest in a single frayed thread on my shirt cuff. I began to believe that A. Whiter Shade of Pale was a great piece of music.

It appears that the document that the war on drugs is to be fought through comprehensive surveys, qualitative studies, long-term evaluations and operational impact summaries.

No doubt somewhere Bodie and Doyle are smashing a hapless Rastafarian, or pale and pimply skinhead, up against a cellar wall and shouting "Shut it, sonny, or we'll hit you so hard you'll have to brush your teeth through your backside." In a sunlit bedroom in a rehab clinic, a gaunt, emaciated young woman prepares to become once again a useful member of society, perhaps as a model — "Sorry, darling, you'll have to go back on the smack, you're looking just a teeny bit bloated these days."

But back in the House of Commons, the real world of drugs and drug abuse seems a thousand miles away. Instead, we were told by the Leader of the House, Ann Taylor, there would be "action teams", "partnership approaches", "intensive reviews", "wide-reaching programmes" which will link up with "well-fare to work" (oh, that again).

All this would be under the dynamic team of — no, not Batman and Robin, who themselves would find the task tricky, but the UK Anti-Drugs

Co-ordinator, Keith Hellawell, and his deputy, Mike Trace. Mr Hellawell is better known to us as the Drugs Tsar. He, of course, is up against the Drug Barons. It is odd that the drugs trade seems to confer instant aristocracy on those involved. Are the drugs barons' understrappers called drugs baronets?

The white paper, like all those consultative documents produced by this government, looks like the prospectus for a rather shady Fep. ("Upper Volta futures have shown promising growth rates...") It has "key objectives", "pro-gramme delivery" and a "DAT chair" who will deliver "essential local co-ordination". We are promised "collaborative, coherent, accessible and cost-effective service provision". Just like the privatised railways, in fact.

It all sounds terrific, and the House of Commons loved it. What it would mean to the average policeman, teacher, parent, clubbing teenager, or, come to that, your typical drug baron in the street, I have no idea at all.

Mrs Taylor, the drugs tsarina, was praised by almost everyone, including Ann Winterton, husband of Nick, who has suddenly been promoted to the Tory front bench. She also landed the former leader of the Commons, Tony Newton, who lost his seat a year ago "and is now in another place".

Which is typical of the quaint terminology of the Commons, since Lord Newton was sitting right there in the Gallery, watching the scene. Paul Flynn, one of the few professional trouble-makers on the Labour benches, asked whether it might not be possible for cannabis to be legalised for medical purposes. There were many people who found that the drug greatly eased their pain. "Must they continue to suffer, or else go to a market controlled by irresponsible criminals? Isn't this unfair and cruel?" he asked.

Mrs Taylor expressed sympathy for these people. But there was insufficient evidence that cannabis or cannabis derivatives were effective agents in such cases. Except, she might have added, the personal experience of the victims, who will now have to carry on seeking out their friendly local Drug Marquess.

Social costs dwarf money for crusade funded by traffickers' profits aimed at getting message to children

£5m extra for war on drugs

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

MINISTERS are to spend only 25 million a year extra to be taken from the seized profits of traffickers — to fight the drugs problem which is costing the country 800 times as much, it was confirmed last night.

As the drugs tsar, Keith Hellawell, outlined his latest analysis of the scale of the problem, the Leader of the Commons Ann Taylor said that any new resources will have to take their chance in the Treasury's comprehensive spending review later this year.

Details of national targets to help the anti-drugs fight will also have to wait until the Whitehall spending battle

is over. All-party support greeted the Government white paper's key recommendation that drugs education should be given to all school children, including those as young as five.

The paper, Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain, says that the Government spends £1.4 billion a year on the drugs problem. The social and economic costs in terms of crime, sickness and absenteeism is estimated at least £3 billion to £4 billion a year.

The paper says that while the Government believes all drugs are harmful, including cannabis, the main enforcement effort will focus on those that cause the greatest damage — heroin and cocaine.

Ms Taylor, the cabinet minister co-ordinating the anti-drug fight, said the Government's 10-year strategy would

"shift resources away from reacting to the problem to preventing it happening in the first place."

It marks a sharp change from the "law and order" rhetoric used when Michael Howard was Home Secretary.

This emphasis on treatment and education would not amount to much unless it was backed with "a cast iron guarantee" of more resources, those working with addicts warned last night. Ministers said that any new money would only go to those treat-

ment programmes that clearly got results.

Mr Hellawell's report shows drug use is most common among teenagers and those in their early 20s. But the average age of first drugs misuse is becoming younger and one in 12 pupils aged 12 have tried drugs at least once. For every three males who have a serious drug problem, there is one female. But the gap between boys and girls who experiment with drugs is closing fast.

The report adds that most

people have never taken an illegal substance, and the majority of those who have are experimenters or casual recreational users. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people are addicts, many of whom do not seek or cannot get effective treatment services. About 1,800 people die each year from drug abuse.

Mr Hellawell said 62 per cent of the annual drugs budget went on "reactive measures" including the police, courts and prisons. Only 12 per cent went on prevention and education and 13 per cent on treatment. He said it would be pie in the sky for him to claim he could create a drug-free society. "I would like that to be the case as a parent and as a grandparent, but we have got to be realistic. We have got to recognise that some people do experi-

ment with drugs and some people become addicted to drugs. "In the longer term we do want to wean people off drugs. We will be setting targets and driving those numbers down."

In the Commons, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats backed drugs education as part of the core school curriculum.

But Paul Flynn, Labour MP for Newport West and a long-time campaigner for cannabis legalisation, said the paper amounted to "fine-tuning the engines on the Titanic".

"The only hope of reducing drug harm is to collapse the illegal, irresponsible criminal drugs market by replacing it with a legal market that can be rigorously licenced, policed and controlled," he said.

Leader comment, page 9

The white paper: key points

- Traffickers' confiscated assets to be used for anti-drug work.
- Shift in resources away from reacting to drug problem to prevention and treatment.
- All children aged five to 16 to receive drug education.
- National targets to be published later this year.
- Drug treatment and testing orders for criminals.

Not so long ago on one top British TV game show, the star prize was a dishwasher — its door fell off. Now you can win a million pounds

Kamal Ahmed on TV's big handout



High on slapstick, low on prizes... host Les Dawson with Bonnie Langford (left) and Aimé MacDonald in the 1980s heyday of BBC1's Blankety Blank

THE biggest quiz show in British television history is to be launched by ITV as the channel seeks to take advantage of the problems faced by the BBC's Big Ticket Show.

With a £1million first prize, Who Wants To Be A Millionaire will involve contestants answering general knowledge questions to build up an increasing bank of money.

The prizes are so large — contestants will also have a chance to win anything up to £900,000 — that ITV has taken out insurance in case too many people are successful.

There was immediate speculation that ITV would launch the programme on Saturday night, in direct competition to the Big Ticket Show, which has struggled to maintain viewing figures.

David Liddiment, ITV's director of programmes, refused to be drawn on when the programme would run.

Announcing the project at the Montreux television festival in Switzerland, he said: "The programme will be like an escalator: the more you get right, the more you win."

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire will include contestants answering multiple choice general knowledge questions. It will be reminiscent of the 1950s American quiz show 21, a huge hit in the US. That show was involved in scandal when one of the contestants admitted that

he had been given the questions beforehand.

On the new ITV programme, for every question contestants answer correctly they will win a cash prize, which they then gamble on the answer to the next question. Contestants can pull out at any stage and take the money won.

Mr Liddiment said that one person would win £1 million during each series of the half-hour quiz with all the money coming from ITV's programme budget.

The BBC's Big Ticket Show, based on Lottery scratchcards, has a £100,000 jackpot, with the money provided by the Lottery operator, Camelot.

Mr Liddiment said ITV could bid to televise the Lottery draw when Camelot's contract with the BBC runs out in November.

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire will be made by Celador, which also makes Talking Telephone Numbers.

Unpublished autobiography shows Bell lacking remorse

continued from page 1

anyone else in the world." He refused to comment on how much the Times had paid the book's publishers Macdonald.

They were offered to a rival broadsheet newspaper for £70,000. Friends of Gitta Sereny last night said she had been working relentlessly on the book for more than two years amid great secrecy. She was convinced that the severity of Bell's punishment constituted an "enormous relative injustice".

Publishing sources expressed surprise that Bell should have collaborated with Ms Sereny. An acclaimed biographer, she covered the original trial and

wrote the definitive book about the case in 1972. "Mary hated Gitta at that time," one said. Yesterday Mr Straw confirmed he was looking at ways of strengthening the Proceeds of Crime Act, to prevent payments to criminals for book deals.

He said nearly everyone would feel a sense of revulsion that people should make money from the heinous killing of children.

Richardson, Martin Brown's mother, yesterday said all profits from Criss Unheard should be given to charity.

"It was the Government's money that paid to keep her in prison and is now paying for her anonymity."

Review

Hispanic hearts on puff sleeves

Bob Flynn

The Mavericks
Clyde Auditorium, Glasgow

A FEW months ago any reference to the Mavericks would have met with blank-eyed stares. Now these eclectic Country and Latinos are in the charts with Dance The Night Away, from their Trampoline album.

They might have had little media fanfare, but they packed Clyde Auditorium with slick-haired retro rockers, cowboy-hatted country girls, waistcoated salsa dancers and dead-serious line-dancing grannies.

In big suits, gliding ties and trimmed beards, the four-man core of the Mavericks look like the imaginary house band from Carillo's Way, the effect heightened by a horn section in frilly, puff-sleeves à la Carmen Miranda.

And even though the combined blast of the big band would raise even Elvis, the feel is that of a musical cabaret rather than a new angle on Country and Latin music.

In a year out of the business the Mavericks transformed themselves from a cult country band into a Florida Los Lobos, wearing their Hispanic influences on their puff sleeves, while still keeping their sukkish boots planted firmly in Nashville.

Which is not as surprising as it sounds, since their Cuban-American singer-guitarist, Raul Malo, has a foot in both camps.

They have taken a distinct retro stance too: from 50s love-lorn crooning in Dream River, to twanging rock riffs and Cu-

bañ mambos in Dance The Night Away, every waterfront is covered with an easy panache — especially by the brilliant guitarist Nick Kane.

The delivery was impeccable and Malo proves that he is a real trooper over two and a half hours, but there is little originality here — none of the brilliant irony of Lyle Lovett or the steely grace of Ry Cooder, both of whom can mould Country and Latin into something bright and new instead of revisiting Herb Alpert.

The Mavericks take on classics such as Blue Moon and Jambalaya with enthusiasm but their own songs lack bite and Malo's voice lacks the high, wide Orbyson range he reached for.

Too often they dive into kitsch, as with the bizarrely out-of-place Vaudeville-style Dolores, complete with Malo on a megaphone. Yes, megaphone. It is strange to see such superb musicians coming over like a mega wedding band, ready to take on any request, any style, at the drop of a two-dollar sombrero.

They were at their best with their brilliant mambo and at their worst when, during calls for an encore, they wheeled on a lone local piper to play 15 minutes of reels, and — God help us — Flower Of Scotland.

Just as the cries of "Get off, ye great git" were reaching a crescendo — we've seen pipers, guys, we came for American music — the Mavericks appeared in full dress kilt and just managed to save the day with a half-hour encore of sambas, country laments and full-out rockers, while conga lines and line dancers bumped in the aisles. Bizarre.

Groups losing charity status may be forced to yield assets

ORGANISATIONS which lose charitable status under a review of the Charity Commission's register may have to surrender assets purchased with charitable funds, the commission warns today, writes David Brindle.

The warning comes as the commission launches a consultation paper on what will happen to the assets of organisations de-registered.

assessed against tests including whether it is "set up and continues to provide something of recognised value to others in society without benefiting individuals in a way which outweighs its social value".

The commission proposes to publish a separate consultation paper on what will happen to the assets of organisations de-registered.

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Shock for shares as treatments fail to yield hoped-for dividends

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Troubled times for biotechnology



An embryologist at work in the lab where Dolly the sheep was cloned — one of the controversies brought about by the biotechnological revolution

PHOTOGRAPH BY MURDO MACLEOD

Shock for shares as treatments fail to yield hoped-for dividends

Biotechnology companies tend to be a triumph of hope over actuality: shareholders invest in them on the promise that profitable drug treatments will be discovered. Many biotechnology companies have yet to make a profit.

Britain's 13 largest biotechnology companies all suffered a collapse of 48 per cent or more in their share prices last year.

Investors lost confidence after revelations that the most promising drugs being developed by British firms had failed the later phases of testing.

The biotechnology sector is hugely overcrowded. In the US alone, there are more than 3,000 biotech groups.

Biotechnology companies attempt to cash in on the entrepreneurial skills of

individual scientists. Drugs giants buy into this potential inventive bonanza by taking discreet shareholdings. Zeneca, for example, recently took a £15 million stake in Chiroscience to gain the chance to market the latter's local anaesthetic, Chirocaine.

The majority of British biotechnology companies concentrate on discovering new drugs for killer diseases such as cancer.

A new drug costs about £250 million to develop and only once sales have topped £220 million a year is it likely to be regarded as a clear financial winner.

The biotech sector has brought about controversies such as Dolly the cloned sheep (and her recent lamb), attempts to patent human genetic material and the genetic engineering of foodstuffs.

More than 1,000 different cancer treatments are currently under development around the world. If all their progenitors' forecasts came true, sales would total £140 billion a year by 2005.

It is estimated that 90 per cent of biotech companies will have drugs that fail or are delayed.

Lisa Buckingham, additional research by Nick Pandya

Rumours leave British Biotech on the ropes

Lisa Buckingham on the predicament of a leading British drugs company

THE distressed management at British Biotech, one of the UK's most prominent independent drug developers, yesterday pledged to refute damaging allegations that trial results of one of its major products were suspect.

The company has been mauled by accusations and revelations by Andrew Miller, who was sacked as head of clinical research for gross misconduct a week ago.

British Biotech faces claims it did not admit quickly enough that the results of some drug trials had failed to live up to expectations. Its chief executive, Keith McCullagh, is also said to have sold shares after being told of problems with one of the company's cancer treatments but before letting other investors know of the difficulties.

The damaging accusations mean British Biotech — whose stock market value has crashed from £1.9 billion to £370 million in only 18 months — could face a fight for survival.

The company, which employs more than 400 people, last night claimed it could and would refute the allegations which it says are not substantiated and are "purely personal opinions" from 42-year-old Dr Miller.

In an effort to convince shareholders of the credibil-



ity of its rebuttal, the company has promised that the document containing its counter-claims will be scrutinised by lawyers and accountants to ensure the highest standards of City probity.

A spokeswoman last night refused to indicate what the statement will say or when it will be sent to its biggest shareholders although confidence among investors in the company has plummeted.

It is a mark of how low this one-time darling of the stock market has sunk. Less than two years ago British Biotech had such a powerful following in the City that it was tipped to join the league of Britain's 100 biggest companies.

For a biotechnology company — whose rating is based on the hope it will discover a multi-billion pound wonder drug — faith is the key.

Once the magic starts to disappear there is nothing fundamental to persuade shareholders to stay along for the ride.

Dr Miller's departure is not the first high-profile executive casualty at the group, which was founded by Mr McCullagh in 1985 with 11 employees.

Only a year ago, James Noble the finance director left, to be followed out four months later by the research and development director, Peter Lewis.

The British Biotech spokeswoman said the company's statement would "eliminate uncertainty" and would contain a detailed response to the points made by Dr Miller, who had been circulating what were substantial or purely personal opinions.

He has claimed Mr McCullagh was aware of problems with the company's batimastat cancer treatment when he sold a large tranche of shares in early 1995 before telling the stock market of the problems. The timing of this disposal has been looked at by the Stock Exchange, which is thought to have reopened its inquiry.

It has also been alleged that British Biotech knew of queries raised by European regulators over its pancreatic drug, Zacutax, months before telling shareholders of the



Chief executive Keith McCullagh: alleged to have sold shares after hearing of problems

possible delay. And it is claimed that there were significant discrepancies between the results of trials of this drug in the UK and the US.

A company statement said it regretted the damage which was being done to its shareholders. Executives are concerned that staff morale will have taken such a hammering that the business will take time to recover.

Although British Biotech is

defending itself vehemently, speculation and doubt have persisted.

The impact of weakening investor confidence can be seen in the response to the disclosure that marketing of Zacutax, which should have started this month, will now be delayed until US trials are complete next year.

The drug is reckoned to account for only a fifth of the company's stock market value, yet problems over its

progress have had a far more damaging impact.

The great hope of the company is Marimastat, a treatment for pancreatic cancer, which is forecast to generate peak sales of £800 million a year.

The drug is up against one of the toughest cancers and has been given only a 60 per cent chance of success. In the world of biotechnology, however, that is seen as more than sporting odds.

Adams seeks concessions in private No 10 talks

Michael White
Political Editor

TONY Blair and the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, yesterday spent 30 minutes alone with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in private Downing Street talks, as the Sinn Féin leadership argued for more concessions ahead of next month's referendum on the Stormont agreement for the future of Northern Ireland.

Although they were joined by officials for a second half hour and the Northern Ireland Secretary spent a further 30 minutes with the Sinn Féin pair, this was the first such private talks — without even a note taker — in No 10, where Mr Blair and Mr Adams are now said to be on "Tony" and "Gerry" terms.

With the Sinn Féin ruling conference due to resume on May 10, Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness were seeking further clarification of the Easter deal, including the possibility of early British troop withdrawals which they characterise as "demilitarisation" of the province, as distinct from the decommissioning of IRA and loyalist paramilitary weapons.

After the talks, Mr Adams told reporters that he had also raised "harassment" by the British army in areas where it was not welcome. Sinn Féin is demanding that the Royal Ulster Constabulary be disbanded and re-formed. "These issues need to be dealt with because they are injustices," he said.

Downing Street later made plain that there was no question of disbanding the RUC, though there would be an independent commission to examine policing in the province. Troops would stay in Northern Ireland "as long as they are needed", the spokesman said.

Both London and Dublin expect the Sinn Féin leadership to recommend a qualified yes to voters on both sides of the border when they make their judgment on May 22. Mr Adams again said yesterday that there was no question of linking troop withdrawal to Sinn Féin's recommendations, but both governments understand Sinn Féin's need to haggle over the deal until the last minute and keep the period between their recommendation and the vote to a decent minimum. Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness are under pressure from hard-line Republicans.

Pressure from the other dissenting wing was also evident yesterday as Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party claimed that the Government was preparing to send members of the royal family, even the Queen, to Northern Ireland to boost support for the yes campaign.

Downing Street confirmed that Mr Blair will visit the province twice before the vote but sidestepped royal visits — though officials insist there would be no question of involving the royal family in the campaign.

Even cruder pressure was manifest in the latest apparently sectarian murder, in which the body of a Roman Catholic from the north was found just inside the Irish border.

News of that murder was known before yesterday's session in Downing Street, which was officially described as "constructive discussion ranging over a number of issues and also looking at the overall picture as we approach the referendum".

Mr Blair is still saying that the agreement "remains the best opportunity for decades for a peaceful future for the people of Northern Ireland".

The DUP claimed at the weekend to have received a leaked army document claiming that contingency plans for troop withdrawals in October are under way and that Ms Mowlam let slip that the home of a senior Sinn Féin negotiator, Gerry Kelly, had been bugged since 1994.

Mr Adams' shopping list yesterday included equality and the promotion of Irish language teaching in Northern Ireland.

How Nat plus West adds up ... to a cool pair of baggies

Alex Bellos
In Rio de Janeiro

FOR dedicated followers of fashion in the south of Brazil there is only one label worth wearing. Style victims shun Levi's, leave their Nikes at home and wouldn't be seen dead in Adidas. The truly en vogue wear NatWest.

In the city of Londrina near the Paraguayan border the name NatWest is the embodiment of cool. It stands for hipper-than-thou skatewear — doubled hemmed T-shirts, baggy jeans and thick Bermuda shorts.

"NatWest — it's a pretty name. It's not sad, it's not happy, it's just strong," says Enio Shotani, the owner of NatWest Street Wear. "Our customers really identify with it."

Luckily, almost everybody in this region, the skateboarding centre of the south of Brazil, is unaware that their favourite label is also the name of one of Britain's biggest banks.

The sales assistants at the brand's four branches — two in Londrina, a city of 400,000 people, and one each in the smaller towns of Apucarana and Unua-

rama — were all incredulous when they found out that the name of their clubber clobber stood for men in grey pin-striped suits on the other side of the world.

"I suppose it's very funny," says Luciano Barbosa, a NatWest shop manager, aged 24. "But we've got nothing to do with banks."

We're under ground.

Looking English words is deemed fashionably cosmopolitan in Brazil. NatWest was chosen for the almost unbelievable reason that they thought it sounded ... spiritual. "We wanted it to have natural vibes," says Mr Barbosa. "It is supposed to mean natural horizon. Nat, for natural, and West for west, because the sun sets in the west."

Mr Shotani says he noticed that his company had an eponymous British rival when he spotted an advertisement for the bank in a magazine a few years back. But he's kept quiet about the other NatWest's existence. "It's a total coincidence. People won't hear the name of a Brazilian bank on fashion wear, so if NatWest bank were to come here I think we'd be in trouble."

Mayday, mayday, offer ends mayday.

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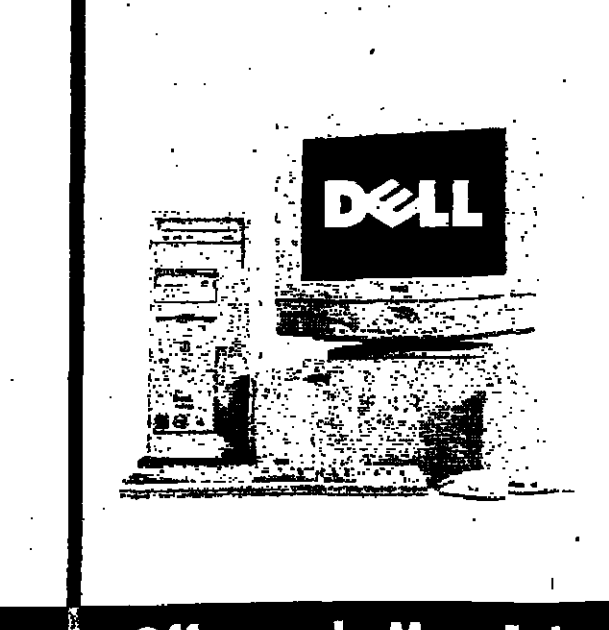
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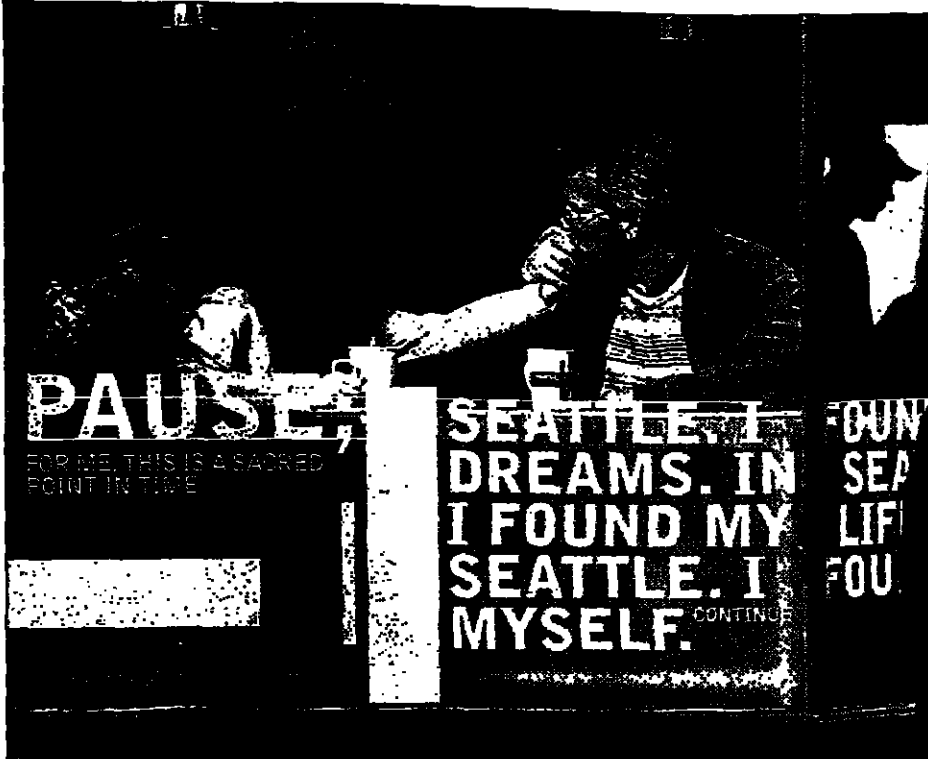
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DELL

Wimbledon used to be true blue, but today even Mercedes-owners are glad they voted Labour

Seismic shift in Wombles suburbia



The Government is riding high in the polls after an eventful first year in power. As the May 1 anniversary approaches Guardian writers assess its performance and gauge the nation's opinion in a series of articles. Today **MATTHEW ENGEL** reports from the traditionally true blue constituency of Wimbledon where a Labour MP was unexpectedly elected.



Even after a seismic shift, life goes on in Wimbledon, with time to relax in the coffee shop (top left) and horses in the street — though the Tory MP, a chairman of the British Field Sports Society, has been replaced by a Labour MP proud to be a glorified social worker

IT WAS the choicest part of one of London's richest constituencies. We were standing outside an estate agent, which had more houses in the window above £1 million than below, and next to the Seattle Coffee Company, which is a triumph of 1990s marketing. We were discussing Tony Blair's government, which is another.

The shop serves "Espresso with Chocolate Extreme, topped with fresh whipped cream". The cream of the Labour Party has been whipped to express no extremes whatever.

I was stopping the most Tory-looking voters I could find. It was not difficult to find people in Wimbledon who looked like Tories, and indeed had been Tories.

It was difficult to find people who still were. They mostly got twitchy if you suggested putting their names in the Guardian. What would people think?

But actually, people all seemed to be thinking the same. "I've been a Conservative all my life, but there's a sort of energy about this government. There seems to be some movement."

"I like Labour more than I thought. They're independent. They're not on the strings of anyone."

"There's rather too much media show and not enough reality, but on the whole I agree with what they've done. I like Gordon Brown."

"Oh, they're all right. They've done very well."

And so on. The evidence of this decidedly unscientific poll was that Wimbledon, if anything, had swung a little more to Labour in the past 12 months. Which is amazing.

On May 1, 1997, Roger Casale, a 37-year-old political science lecturer, gained Wimbledon on a swing of 17.9 per cent from the sitting Conservative, Charles Goodson-Wickes. By statistical criteria, it was the safest Tory seat to

fall that night: a majority of nearly 15,000 turned into a deficit of nearly 3,000. The home of tennis, the Wombles and a substantial number of senior civil servants, attracted by the bourgeois delights of suburbia and the District Line, had turned upside down.

It is tempting to say that no one expected it. Certainly, the vast majority of Labour activists were far more interested in next-door Mitcham and Morden, which fitted the pre-May 1 definition of a marginal. Many Wimbledon Labour people had spent the campaign going there.

"Their attitude," said one Casale supporter, "was that we love you dearly, but this is real politics."

There seems to have been one exception: Roger Casale claims to have been confident of victory all along. "I think he's telling the truth," said his Lib Dem opponent, Alison Willott. "He was a new candidate, and when you're new you'll believe anything."

Nationally, the result was lost in the rush. The fall of Dr Goodson-Wickes could hardly compare to the fall of Michael Portillo. He was hardly a big star in Westminster, never mind in Wimbledon, which was part of the problem. And on a night when places as straggly and cream as Hove, Sittingbourne and Edgubaston also went Labour, it was difficult to be shocked.

But the political landscape of south-west London has now been transformed. Five nearby seats have gone Lib Dem; the nearest Tory MP is miles away. This may be temporary. But the conception of what an MP is and does may well have been altered for ever. What happened in Wimbledon may make far more impact on the long-term nature of British politics than anyone has yet realised.

Dr Goodson-Wickes was an old-fashioned kind of member. He did his casework adequately enough. But he lived in Wiltshire, and his political

hobby-horse was indeed his hobby horse: he was passionately pro-hunting and chairman of the British Field Sports Society. This is not Wimbledon's No. 1 political concern. Wimbledon had gone Labour once before, in 1945, but years of unchallenged Tory dominance had turned the party and its MP complacent. Richard Aitken-Davies, the chairman of the Conservative Association, admits there was dissatisfaction. "I think it was unfair, but there was certainly adverse comment, including some from party members. Dr Goodson-Wickes wasn't able to raise his profile."

Mind you, not every party member was in a position to say anything. "We had about 800 party members listed," said Mr Aitken-Davies. "But some of them hadn't paid up for years, and I have to be honest with you, some of them were dead."

Other parties were astonished by the Tory campaign. "I saw Goodson-Wickes at the

station one day distributing leaflets," said David Cowling, a political analyst and former Labour councillor, "and they were pretty scrappy leaflets too. He wasn't glad-handing or anything. He was just doing the job of a foot-soldier. I thought: 'My God! They must be doing pretty badly'."

Mr Cowling says that the Tories were so short of helpers that one polling station had to be manned all day by an 88-year-old woman just recovering from a hip operation. There was no one to take over, and her opponents had to look after her. "It was a symbol of their disintegration."

Labour people were so spooked by past disasters that they assumed there must be some secret Tory masterplan: they were working the phones or something. But in Wimbledon what people saw was what they were about to get: Roger Casale working his socks off. Tony Benn spoke at his adoption meeting. That aside, everything about the new MP

suggests the very model of a modern milky moderate. He has appointed a local project manager for each of Labour's five main pledges. He is an expert on the European left, yet his conversation is all about his electorate and their interests, rather than his. He talks about being the link between Wimbledon and Westminster (more reliable than the train, maybe); he describes himself as "a one-stop shop" for constituents. If he has any political cynicism, he has suppressed it ruthlessly.

"But aren't you just being a glorified social worker?" "Then I'm very proud of the fact. I'm staggered by the amount of work I can do as a local resource."

It is arguable whether this fits with the Burkean concept of a Member of Parliament's function. It is unthinkable that Dr Goodson-Wickes could ever have talked in such terms. But he will not be back. And it seems certain that the next Conservative candidate

for Wimbledon will be expected to match Mr Casale's methods.

"It was a most salutary thing to walk up to a house with a couple of Mercedes outside, and find people weren't going to support us," says Mr Aitken-Davies. "It gave us a clear message. We need to work very hard."

One voter who had not got the message told Mr Casale that if the Tories put up a squirrel, he would still get elected.

It seems the only way back for them is to put up someone willing to squirrel around like anything. Wimbledon shares that with the rest of Britain. We have not just a new government but a new idea of what an MP is for. **TOMORROW: Even Mac Askill reports from Airdrie, one of the poorest and most sectarian towns in the country.**

Education Guardian, G2 pages 12-13

And how was it for you?



STEPHEN BAYLEY, ex-dome supremo: "We have government by press release. Not stonemasonry, but scene-shifting."

"This is a political regime where the chief events are symbolic. Fine if Tony Blair's a Simply Red fan, but that's a political taste, not a matter of state."

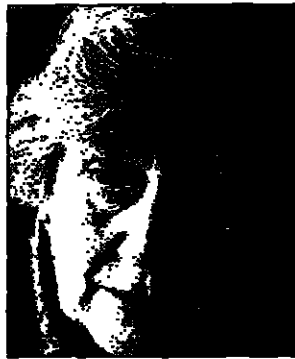
"The Millennium Dome is the most powerful symbol of all. Under political direction divorced from all principles besides vote-grubbing expediency, the contents of the dome will be lazy cliché, wapid kitsch and what Auberon Waugh calls 'patronising rubbish'."



SEBASTIAN FAULKS, author: "This is the most satirically enjoyable Cabinet for 90 years. They are wonderfully amusing."

"Not since Harold Wilson has there been such entertainment value as has been presented by Cook, Straw, Harman and Irvine."

"The relations between the Prime Minister and the Murdoch empire remain troubling."



SHIRLEY WILLIAMS, Liberal Democrat peer: "Repressive. The constitutional changes are a bit rushed but represent reform on an epic scale."

"The Northern Ireland agreement, built on the patience and generosity of spirit shown by Tony Blair, Mr Nowlan, Hume, Trimble and Alderdice may, if it survives, become a model for other troubled parts of the world."

"But, to sum up, it is good to see a new radical force building in British politics."



SIR HERMAN OUSELEY, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality: "Understanding what New Labour stood for and where racial equality fitted in was, initially, a big problem for me and many other people."

"Some people remain cynical because there is no race explicitness. However, the Government, for its own reasons, deliberately undercuts what it is doing and the real equality impact of its many programmes will emerge over the next few years."

"This is a long haul and some coherence is only now beginning to emerge."



BECKY GARDNER, editor of the Big Issue: "Tony Blair came in on a huge wave of enthusiasm, but many already feel let down — the young, trade unionists, single mothers."

"But on the other hand he has introduced a Scottish and a Welsh assembly, and recreated a local authority for London. The jury is still out. He has to convince the people he is beginning to liberate that he is there for them."

"For us, he has consulted homeless groups, but there has not been much action on policy yet. However, it is only one year, and whenever I feel down I think of least we haven't got the other lot."



DAVID BRYER, director of Oxfam: "We fully support the Government's emphasis on an ethical dimension to foreign policy and on putting eradication of poverty at the heart of development policy."

"We are encouraged by the headline ban, the setting up of a Department for International Development and the Chancellor's efforts to reduce the debt of the poorest nations."

"But we have serious concerns. There has been no reverse in the decline in the quantity of aid, nor a clear timetable for that reverse. The Government has a long way to go in making the practice of small-arms sales match its aspirations."



RACHEL HEYHOE-FLINT, golf player and ex-England women's cricket captain: "I feel very sad that Tony Blair has attacked middle England, and by doing so alienated the many thousands who were responsible for putting him in power."

"There needs to be a much higher level of funding for sports coaching, and I can't see an improvement in that direction at all."

"Public expenditure cuts will lead to the scaling of playing fields and sports facilities in general."

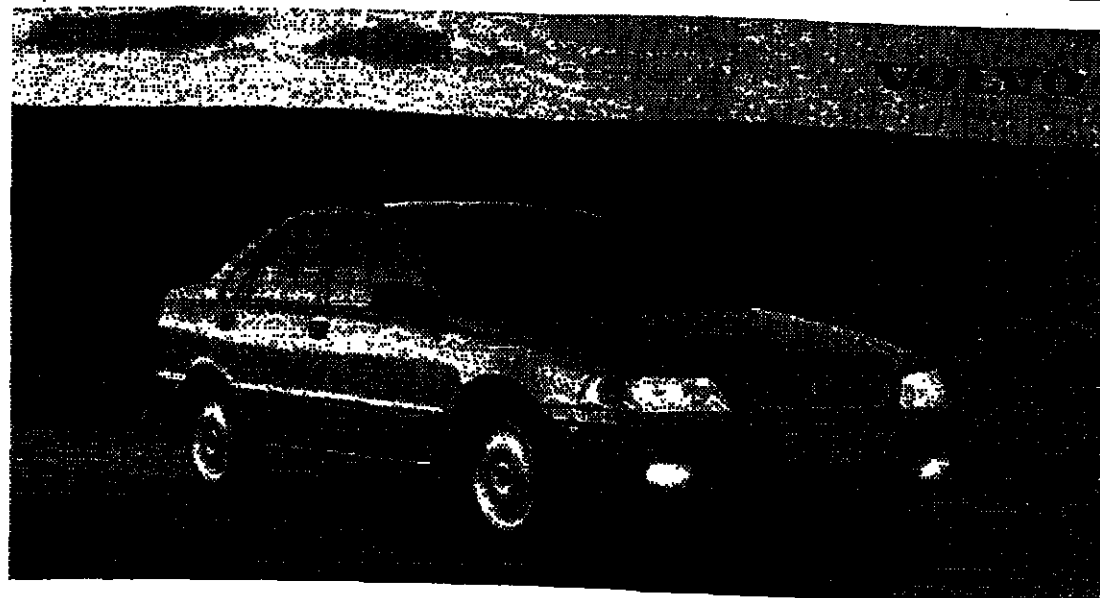
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Warning over wider social divide

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

UNEMPLOYMENT will worsen dramatically and divisions between rich and poor will widen further unless the Government overhauls the benefits and education system to cope with future patterns of work, a leading independent think-tank warns today.

According to the Royal Society for Arts, which has spent the past two years investigating the future workplace, the Government and most of big business are using models which are more likely to be based on pre-war Britain.

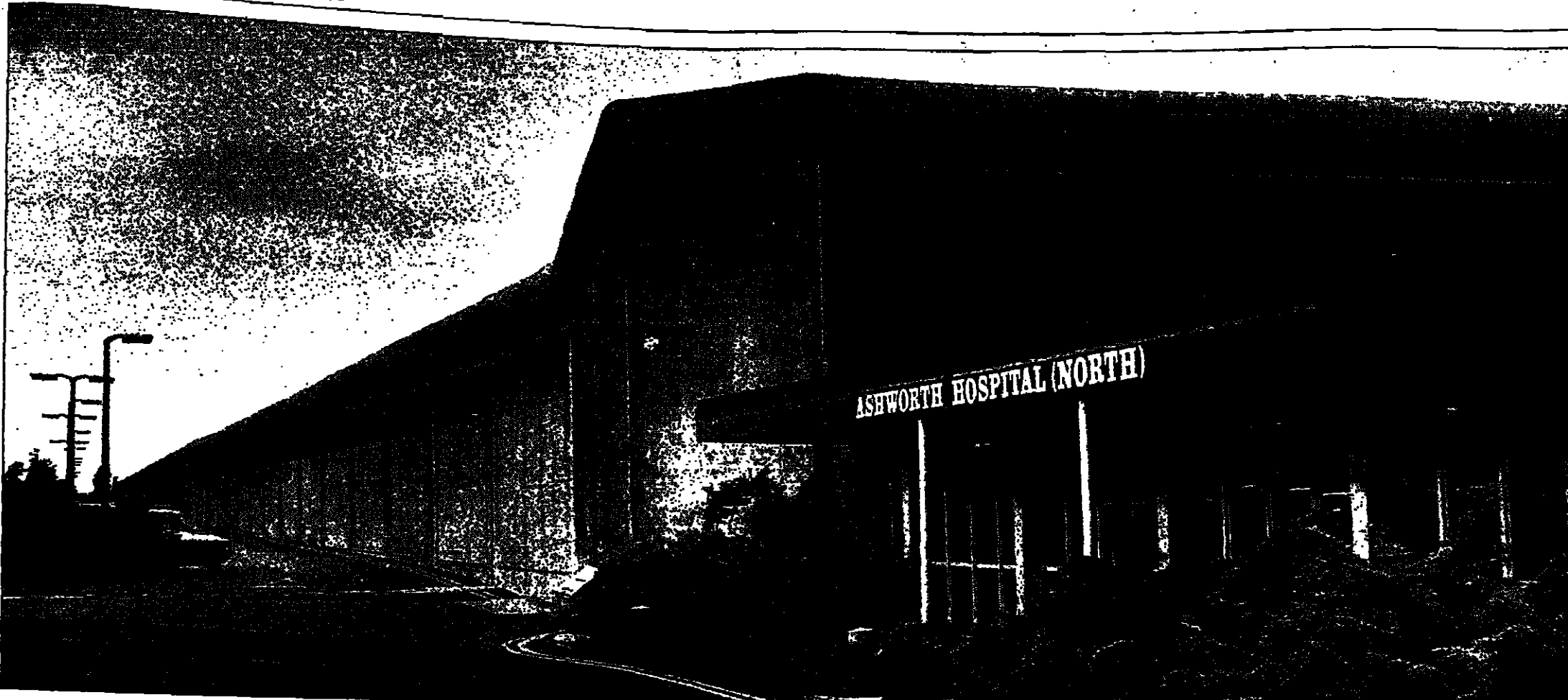
The only certainty for employees in 2020 will be uncertainty, the RSA asserts. Information technology will propel business change at a rate which only the most highly skilled employees will be able to match.

Less able workers risk being excluded from the workplace at a time when safety net benefits will be eroded by a trend towards individual provision of pensions and health care.

Valerie Bayliss, author of *Redefining Work*, criticises government for failing to make changes to the benefits system which would help rather than hinder more flexible working patterns. "There can be no argument for services which place barriers in peoples' way or try to impose patterns on work and careers that have disappeared from the real world," she said.

The RSA has secured some powerful industry backing for its project which is expected to prompt several spin-off studies which will explore particularly, the blurring of the divide between the private, public and voluntary sectors.

But the report makes clear that action on several recommendations will be necessary within the next two or three years if Britain is not to find itself eclipsed in the early part of the new millennium.



Ashworth hospital on Merseyside, whose personality disorder unit is the subject of a resumed inquiry. The top security establishment houses some of the country's most disturbed criminals. PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS THORPE

Paedophile 'romps' in hospital

Inquiry into top security unit told about sale of drugs, drink and porn, and patient who frolicked with near-naked girl aged eight

David Ward

A CONVICTED paedophile was allowed to romp with an eight-year-old girl brought to a top security hospital by her father, himself an ex-patient, an inquiry heard yesterday. Dressed only in her knickers, the girl rode on the man's back as he crawled on all fours and rolled with him on the floor of a ward at Ashworth hospital in Merseyside, which houses some of Britain's most disturbed criminals, including Moors murderer Ian Brady. The girl, known as Child A, was also seen to disappear with the man into a makeshift

tent made by throwing a bedspread over a chair, said John Royce QC, on the first day of resumed hearings of the Fallon inquiry at Knutsford crown court, Cheshire, into the running of the hospital's personality disorder unit. Mr Royce was quoting allegations from Stephen Daggett, an Ashworth patient who absconded in 1996, and then — in a document called *My Concerns* — blew the whistle on the availability of drugs, alcohol, porn videos and alleged paedophile activity at the hospital's PDU. Daggett attended yesterday's hearings of the inquiry, set up by former health secretary Stephen Dorrell, and said he would have been "seriously injured or dead" if he



The interior of Ashworth hospital, where patients spoke of "happy hour" visits by a young girl.

had made his allegations from within the hospital. Mr Royce told the inquiry's chairman, Peter Fallon QC, that one patient referred to Child A's visits to Ashworth as the "happy hour". He named the patient who is alleged to have romped with the girl as Peter Hemming, convicted of sexual offences with

girls as young as seven. He said Child A had also played with Paul Corrigan, sentenced for manslaughter in 1981 after abducting a 13-year-old paper boy, keeping him captive in chains, torturing and then sexually abusing him before killing him. "The situation should never have arisen where a

child should be exposed to the risk of indecent activity with a man with [Hemming's] substantial history of sexual offending against little girls," said Mr Royce. "Were those visits [by the eight-year-old] innocent... or part of a grooming process for that young girl, who was brought in in part for the

pleasure of those to whom she was exposed?"

Daggett, now at Rampton, said he had been able to watch the games involving the girl from his bedroom window. "I certainly don't think they were for the child's benefit," he said. Hemming, he added, made no secret of his fascination with younger girls, and had "eyed them up" on group visits outside Ashworth. He also had a photograph of Child A lying on a bed in pyjamas.

"The father of the child knew exactly what was going on," he said. "I have no doubt that money was passing in one way or another... Hemming was either paying Child A or being blackmailed because of that access."

Daggett also described the "car boot sale" in the garden of Lawrence ward in which drugs, drink, videos, CDs and large amounts of cash changed hands. An adult porn video would cost up to £25, but a "nasty tape" featuring

children could fetch more than £100.

He told the inquiry most porn material was brought in by visitors, including Child A's father. The inquiry heard Daggett claim that Lawrence ward was a favourite place for drug dropping or trading. He estimated that up to £10,000 in cash was circulating around the ward, and alleged security was lax.

Asked if nurses were corrupt or intimidated, he said: "All I can do is speculate. There were some corrupt staff working in the hospital, and on Lawrence ward. Some staff were incredibly naive."

The inquiry heard that Daggett absconded during an escorted shopping trip to Liverpool. He changed his name by deed poll, acquired a driving licence, and had applied for a passport, using another patient's personal details. He visited Holland and regularly rang Ashworth to explain that his absence was a protest against his treatment, before returning there voluntarily.

Nanny denies severe shaking

Rory Carroll

A CHILD in the care of a nanny may have died of so-called shaken baby syndrome, a forensic pathologist told an inquest yesterday. Initial tests showed evidence of haemorrhage in the brain and eyes of six-month-old Caroline Jenson but it would take another six weeks to discover exactly why she died, said Freddy Patel.

The nanny, Louise Sullivan, appeared yesterday before Clerkenwell magistrates, London. Sullivan, aged 26, denies causing grievous bodily harm with intent.

Caroline, from Cricklewood, north-west London, died last week after four days on a life support machine.

Dr Patel told St Pancras coroner's court, north London, he would consult other specialists before making his final report to ensure there was no other possible cause of death.

Dr Patel said provisionally he would attribute cause of death to commotio cerebri, an internal cranial catastrophe, but added: "I must try to find out what caused it. On initial examination, there was no evidence of any marks of violence externally," he said.

The coroner, Stephen Chan, formally adjourned the inquest for 28 days pending further police inquiries. He released the body of the baby for burial.

Caroline's parents, Marjol Jenson, a banker from Holland, and his French wife Muriel, did not attend the hearing.

Detective Chief Inspector David Brown told the court that Caroline was born on October 5, 1997, at Hampstead, north London.

Mr Brown said that an ambulance had been called to the house at Cricklewood at 11.15am on April 17, and the baby was initially taken to the Royal Free hospital in Hampstead but later transferred to Great Ormond Street hospital, central London. She was declared dead at 4.30pm on April 21.

He added: "A person was arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm to baby Caroline and later charged with that offence. She was remanded in custody but later released on bail."



Antony Penrose, son of the photographer Lee Miller, sorts through family archive photographs they are on show at Pelham House in Lewes, East Sussex, until May 5. c55.6PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER RAMBER

Killing 'was not racist'

David Pallister

A RETIRED police sergeant prompted angry exchanges at the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry yesterday when he said he did not believe Stephen's death was the result of a racist attack. Detective Sergeant John Davidson, who left the Metropolitan police a month ago, said: "I still refuse to accept it was a racist attack. I believe it was thugs who were out to kill, not particularly a black person but anybody. It was pure, bloody-minded thuggery."

His evidence led to accusations by Michael Mansfield QC, the Lawrence family's lawyer, of neglecting his duty by failing to follow up evidence from key witnesses. At one stage a riled Mr Davidson said: "I've been accused directly of racism before and I won't accept it."

Stephen died aged 18 after being stabbed by five white youths in Edithan, south-east London, on April 22, 1993. Neil Accart, 22, Gary Dobson, 22, and Luke Knight, 20, were prosecuted by the Lawrences at the Old Bailey in 1996 but the case collapsed. The cases of Jamie Accart, 21, and David Norris, 21, never got to trial. The inquiry heard yesterday that local people, who knew details of Stephen's death before the information had been made public and who provided the police with names, were not believed by Mr Davidson and no records of meetings were kept. Mr Davidson said: "I wanted to find a witness to this murder. I believed the people responsible were the ones that were named."

News in brief

Footballer cleared of hitting ex-lover

ENGLAND striker Stan Collymore was yesterday cleared of punching his former lover during a row over their baby son. Magistrates at Cannock in Staffordshire decided there was reasonable doubt and therefore found the 27-year-old Aston Villa player not guilty of common assault, a charge he denied. During the trial it was alleged he had forced his way into the home of Michelle Green, aged 23, last December and knocked her to the floor.

Heroin gang jailed

FOUR members of a heroin-smuggling ring were jailed yesterday in a case arising from the seizure of 44kg of heroin, worth £8 million, in Tottenham, north London, in 1996. Ozer Esat, aged 54, from northern Cyprus, was jailed for 23 years at Woolwich crown court in south London after being found guilty of conspiring to supply Class A drugs. Tan Onbasi, aged 22, of Enfield, north London, was sentenced to 20 years on the same charge. Arkin Izgil, aged 25, of Hackney, east London, was jailed for 18 years for money laundering; all three denied the charges.

SAS military pair are cleared of gun charges

Owen Bowcott

A N SAS corporal and a Parachute Regiment quartermaster sergeant illegally allowed members of a private gun club to fire M16 assault rifles and anti-tank weapons on an Aldershot army range, a judge ruled yesterday.

But both men not named for "national security reasons", were given absolute discharge at Southwark crown court in south London because they committed the offences unwittingly, amid widespread confusion in the military over the law.

Judge Peter Fingert said he hoped his "wholly exceptional" sentencing would go some way towards "redressing" the suffering of the former SAS corporal and the decorated member of the Parachute Regiment's elite Pathfinder Platoon.

"The two appeared here following misunderstanding by and confusion within the army and Ministry of Defence as to the facilities available to the public, that confusion now having been remedied by an act of parliament," explained the judge.

Both the ex-SAS corporal, known during the trial as X, and his co-defendant, known as Y, admitted two strict liability offences under the Firearms Act, namely "possessing and transferring" M16 and SA80 assault rifles to members of the public in 1996. But Judge Fingert said he was satisfied that "no moral culpability attaches to either of them".

He had earlier observed that it was "unsurprising" the soldiers were as "unfamiliar with the legal requirements as their senior officers".

Outside the court, Alice Dodd, solicitor for X, said that since their arrest both men's careers had suffered and they had lost pay and pension rights. A senior officer, whom the judge found — despite claims to the contrary — had known what the two soldiers were doing and had even given his "tacit approval", had been promoted.

Last week the court heard that for years the army, and the SAS and the Pathfinder Platoon in particular, had allowed members of the public to use prohibited weapons under strict supervision without realising they were contravening the Firearms Act.

As well as Manchester United and national rugby players, guests included gun club members, parties from military suppliers and Lloyd's underwriters.

The visits ended in 1994 after several books by ex-SAS members forced the unit to adopt a lower public profile.

The following year MoD lawyers told army chiefs they had been breaking the law by allowing the public to fire restricted weapons.

The practice was banned, although a change in regulations last year reinstated it. But while it was illegal, and despite a warning circular, many senior army officers remained ignorant of the legal position.

The prosecution had alleged that two undercover police officers who paid £350 each for the day were told "backhanders" had been paid to set it up.

That was denied by the soldiers, who insisted they did nothing underhand or secret.

X agreed he was paid £1,100 for his services, but insisted he gave £500 of that money to Y. The former Parachute Regiment sergeant accepted the figure, but insisted he paid £500 into his platoon's Glaxo Club fund to pay for barbecues and flowers to mark births and deaths.

An MoD spokesman said later: "We will study very carefully the comments the judge is reported to have made."

Journalist in Internet porn case claims First Amendment

Martin Kettle in Washington

In a case which American civil liberties groups believe may be the first of its kind, an American radio reporter who claims he was researching for a feature has been charged with possession and distribution of child pornography over the Internet.

Larry Matthews, an editor with National Public Radio (NPR) who has 31 years' experience in radio news, has been charged by prosecutors in Maryland with nine counts of possession and six counts of distribution of child pornography. His case comes before the courts in July. If convicted, Mr Matthews faces up to 15 years imprisonment on each count.

Mr Matthews' case is

'It's important for reporters to be able to pursue distasteful subjects'

Likely to be the first in which the rights of a journalist under the US Constitution's First Amendment come face-to-face with the law on Internet pornography. As a result, the American Civil Liberties Union, NPR and two organisations representing radio journalists have asked to be represented at the trial.

Mr Matthews' lawyer told the Washington Post that Mr Matthews was trying to research a story on child pornography on the Internet and on efforts to police it.

He said that he gained access to the private chat rooms — the Internet equivalent of a telephone party line — frequented by people interested in child pornography and identified himself as a reporter who was interviewing participants. When he joined the chat room, the others rapidly left, he said.

Then, in a further at-

tempt to make contact, Mr Matthews said that he took on "the persona of the people he was trying to reach" and asked other users to send him photos that they were chatting about. "He believed it was the only way he would be able to gather information for a freelance piece he was trying to research," Mr Matthews' lawyer said.

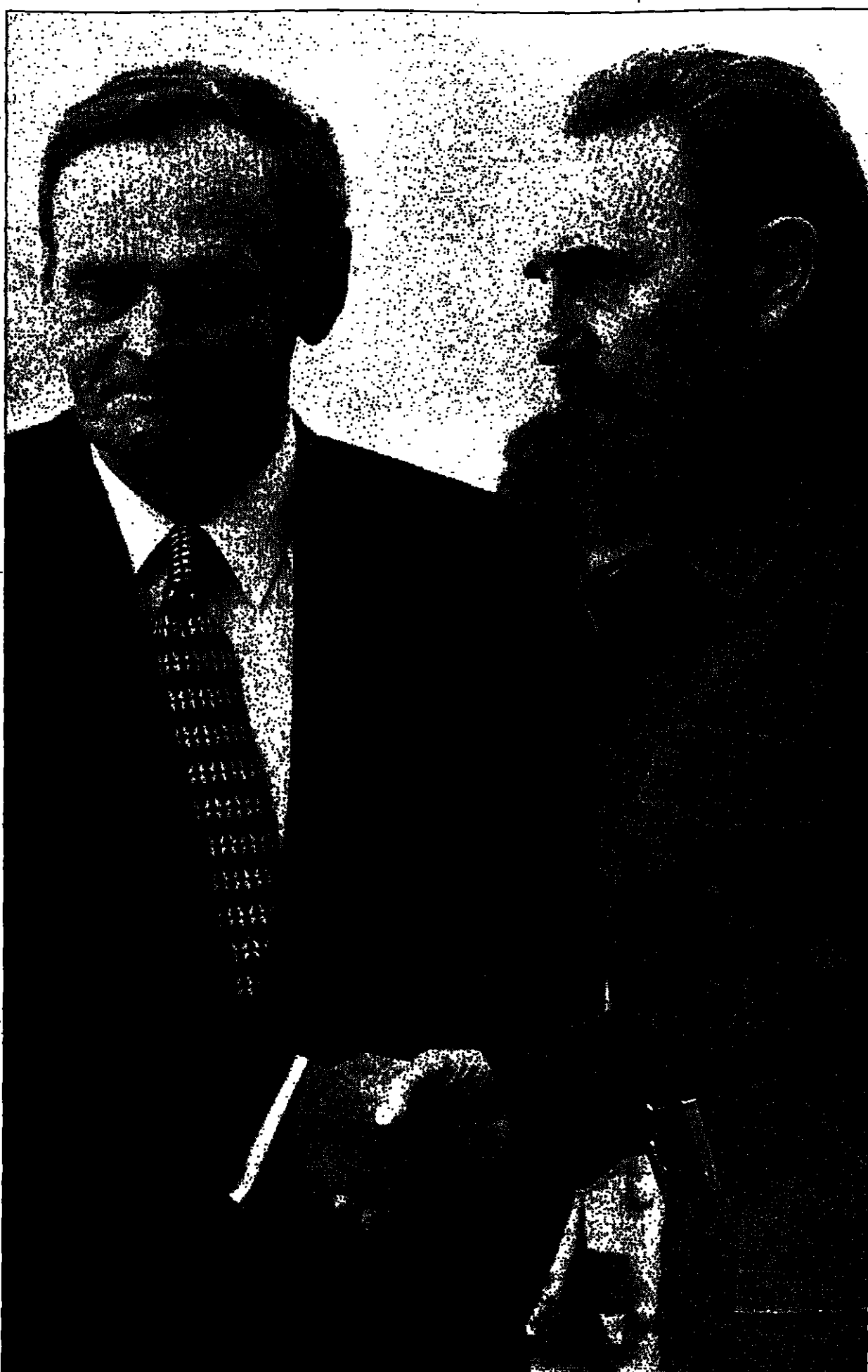
The tactic worked, and Mr Matthews received several pornographic photos of young girls. In the hope of gaining the trust of other child porn Internet users, he also sent some of the photos over the Web. It was at this point that Mr Matthews was arrested. He is now seeking to argue in court that he was protected from conviction because of the First Amendment, which says that Congress may make no law "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press".

His supporters say that the Matthews case will be a crucial test case for the use of the Internet by investigative journalists. "We think it's important for reporters to be able to pursue difficult and occasionally distasteful subjects. We feel this prosecution is very chilling," said Barbara Cochran of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, one of the organisations which is supporting Mr Matthews.

"It's always in the name of some horrendous evil, like child pornography, that important rights tend to get stripped away," said Robert Corr-Revere, a Washington lawyer who specialises in journalism law and First Amendment rights.

Maryland prosecutors argue that Mr Matthews should not be allowed to defend himself by citing the First Amendment. They say that what Mr Matthews did was analogous to selling crack cocaine in an attempt to develop information on illegal drug dealing. But Mr Matthews says: "It's a frightening thing. Can the government take any topic and say, the only thing you're allowed to report is what we tell you?"

US under fire for Cuba ban



President Fidel Castro greets Jean Chrétien at the start of the Canadian prime minister's first visit to Cuba. Canadian companies are among the largest foreign investors in Cuba, infuriating Washington

Canada and EU lead calls for engagement with Castro regime

Stephen Bates in Luxembourg and Martin Kettle in Washington

WASHINGTON'S continuing cold-war boycott of Cuba came under fire on both sides of the Atlantic yesterday, underlining the increasing isolation of the United States caused by its refusal to do business with Fidel Castro's regime.

Canada's prime minister began a high-profile visit to Cuba, while European Union foreign ministers put Atlantic free-trade plans on ice until the US shelves attempts to penalise European companies that trade with Havana.

On the first full day of his first Cuban visit, the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, spoke out in support of a policy of "constructive engagement" with Cuba and recalled the Pope's call in January for the world to "open itself to Cuba". Mr Chrétien criticised continuing sanctions against the Castro regime, though without naming the US.

"Through good times and bad, our countries have always chosen dialogue over confrontation, engagement over isolation, exchange over estrangement," he said.

In reply, President Castro delivered a strong attack on the US for its sanctions, which he described as "the most prolonged, unjust and brutal blockade in history". He said: "No state should think it has the right to kill another people by hunger and sickness. That is genocide. It is converting a nation into a ghetto and applying a new version of the Holocaust."

The two leaders spoke at the opening of a \$25 million terminal at Havana International airport, half of which has been financed by Canada. Canadian companies are among the largest foreign investors in Cuba, and executives from the Canadian-owned Sheritt International mining giant have been banned from entering the US in retaliation.

Later Washington hit back at Mr Castro's criticism, saying he had proved himself "woefully out of touch" when he called for organisers of the embargo to be put on trial as war criminals.

The White House spokesman Mike McCurry, commenting on Mr Chrétien's visit, acknowledged that US policy had not "brought about a blossoming of democracy in Cuba". But he

said: "We think over time it represents a better prospect for bringing about change."

Washington's Helms-Burton law, under which the Canadian businessmen have been banned, is at the centre of the long-running dispute between the EU, which supports trade links with Cuba, and the Clinton administration. The law, passed two years ago, has yet to be invoked against EU companies, but conflicts are looming.

At their Luxembourg meeting yesterday, EU foreign ministers shelved proposals — put forward by the trade commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan — for a free-trade area agreement with the US, until the dispute over Helms-Burton is resolved.

EU officials hope to reach a deal before the EU-US summit in London on May 18. One said yesterday: "We would love a deal before the summit and are working for a negotiated solution but it must be one which gives protection

'Our countries have chosen dialogue over confrontation, exchange over estrangement'

for European firms against US sanctions legislation."

The EU has threatened that if sanctions are applied against any European company it will complain to the World Trade Organisation. The EU also wants to be exempted from US "D'Amato restrictions" against companies that trade with Iran. Talks on the Iran dispute are to resume tomorrow.

Sir Leon's plans for a "new transatlantic market place", removing trade barriers and liberalising investment and intellectual property rights, are expected to be worth \$100 million a year to the EU within five years.

Although the EU's tough line is to some extent a negotiating stance, it comes as Washington's attempt to drag small countries into its boycott of Cuba is showing signs of failure. Several Latin American and Caribbean countries have re-established diplomatic ties with Cuba. This month the United Nations Human Rights Commission refused to condemn Cuba for the first time in many years.

War games show up germ defences

Judith Miller and William Broad in New York

ONE day last month, 40 officials from more than a dozen US federal agencies met secretly in Washington to play out what would happen if terrorists attacked the United States with a devastating new type of germ weapon. The results were not encouraging.

In the scenario, terrorists spread a virus along the Mexican-American border. After doctors diagnosed the epidemic as smallpox, vaccines were rushed in to immunise the population, but the virus turned out to be a hybrid for which there was no cure.

As the scenario unfolded, officials playing the role of state and local officials were quickly overwhelmed by a panicked population, thousands of whom were dying, and discovered huge gaps in logistics, legal authority and medical care.

The outcome of the exercise surprised some participants but illustrated what others had long suspected: the US, despite huge investments of time, money and effort in recent years, is still unprepared to respond to biological weapons. The exercise, officials said, also underlined the need for a sweeping plan that President Clinton is expected to approve this week.

Mr Clinton's interest in germ warfare has been deepened by books, aides said. He was so alarmed by one — a novel by Richard Preston titled *The Cobra Event*, which portrays a lone terrorist's attack on New York City with a genetically engineered virus — that he instructed intelligence experts to evaluate its credibility. Experts tend to

disagree on the plausibility of such high-technology threats. But most agree that the danger will grow and that such an attack, if successful, could be catastrophic.

Apprehension about germ warfare grew in 1995 as Iraq admitted that it had built a large biological arsenal and was prepared to use it during the Gulf war in 1991. The General Accounting Office, in a report in December, criticised the government for a serious lack of co-ordination in efforts to counter the world threat. The US government concedes at least some of its failings. According to a draft of an inter-agency study, government counter-terrorism programmes suffer from a lack of intelligence-sharing and a lack of information about what individual terrorists or groups may be plotting.

William Haseltine, an expert on genetic engineering whom the White House asked to review the scenario, said that it was realistic. "You could make such a virus today," he said. "Any trained molecular virologist with a really good lab can do it."

Administration officials said the scenario was intended to inflict a substantial disaster to put strain on the system and reveal any weaknesses. Among the shortcomings, officials said, were that in such emergencies hospitals would quickly exhaust supplies of antibiotics and vaccines. One participant said that it was very difficult to get trained, immunised medical staff into an infected area.

Washington may now create a national stockpile of vaccines, antibiotics and antidotes.

Kidnapped girls stand by father

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE daughters of the Florida socialite who has been accused of kidnapping them from their mother nearly 20 years ago rallied to his defence in an emotional press conference in Boston yesterday.

Rachael Martin, aged 23, and Lisa Martin, aged 21, said Stephen Fagan, who changed all their identities after seizing them in 1979, was a good father and that they would stand by him.

"The media has portrayed him as everything from a gold-digging playboy to a thief," Rachael Martin said. "I'm here to tell you that is not true."

Her sister Lisa said Mr Fagan "was, and is, the best mother, father and friend anyone could ask for".

Neither woman mentioned their mother, Barbara Kurth, who was awarded custody of her daughters when her marriage to Mr Fagan ended in divorce in 1978. Mr Fagan had told his daughters their mother died in a car crash. The case hit the headlines last week when Mr Fagan,

who for the past 20 years has led a glamorous life as William Martin, was charged with kidnapping.

Mr Fagan had worked as a karate instructor and as a lawyer in Massachusetts. He reinvented himself as Dr William Martin, a smooth-talking Florida socialite whose millionaire lifestyle in Palm Beach was a source of mystery to his friends because he had no apparent source of income. He is currently married to his fourth wife, Harriet, an estate agent.

At the time of his arrest, Mr Fagan said he had rescued his daughters, then aged five and two, from an alcoholic mother, Mrs Kurth, who now works as a cellular biologist at the University of Virginia.

Top fireman 'was serial arsonist'

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles

THE villain of the novel was a pyromaniac who used a simple device to start a blaze at Cal's ironmonger store in Pasadena, north Los Angeles. The fire killed a woman and her grandson aged two.

The author of *Points of Origin* was fire captain John Leonard Orr, a recognised arson expert who led an eight-man team investigating several devastating fires in southern California. His manuscript was crammed with detail.

But federal crime investigators were also investigating the fires and, when they read Orr's book, they broke the case. The fire described in chapter six was remarkably like the one at Ole's hardware store in Pasadena that killed a woman and her two-year-old grandson. The fire was started with a timing device made of a rubber band, matches and a cigarette.

The Pasadena fire was just one of several fires allegedly started by Orr. Ex-

perts say his wish to be present at the discovery and extinguishment of fires is part of a pyromaniac personality type.

At his trial in Los Angeles this week, prosecutors will attempt to prove that Orr, aged 49, even began fires near balls where he attended conferences.

Orr, who is already in jail, convicted on three federal arson charges, now faces the death penalty for more than 24 counts of arson and murder.

The Pasadena fire is crucial to the case. Prosecutors say Orr described the actual deaths of the woman, her grandson and two employees in graphic detail, but changed their names.

Another fire allegedly caused by Orr was the 1991 blaze that destroyed the back lot of Warner Bros Studios in Burbank. The blaze, which was reported as the worst of the 1970s series, The

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OSOVO violence worse



EU steps up sanctions on Belgrade as more Albania killed and Serb refuse media

Albright a mistrust

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Not surprisingly, a neighbour who overlooks the gallery and sees the missile every time he goes to the bathroom has started to make complaints. Good heavens, what's wrong with these people? Don't they appreciate modern art?

Adrian Searle on the Young Americans 2 exhibition

Arts, G2 page 8

مكتبة الامم

Kosovo violence worsens



Ethnic Albanian mourners (left) in the Kosovo village of Haxhi Zade have attended the funerals of nine compatriots killed by Yugoslav soldiers in border clashes last week as they attempted to smuggle weapons. (Right) a soldier shows some of the ammunition left behind

PHOTOGRAPHS: SERJAN LUCI (left), SERJAN LUCI



EU steps up sanctions on Belgrade as more Albanians killed and Serbs refuse mediation

Stephen Bates in Luxembourg

EUROPEAN foreign ministers sought desperately to gain a grip on the escalating violence in Kosovo yesterday by stepping up sanctions on Belgrade and increasing pressure on Serbia to allow outside mediation in the dispute.

At least three Albanians were reported killed and four wounded yesterday in clashes between Serbian troops and presumed members of the Kosovo Liberation Army along the Albanian border. Albanian sources put the number killed at up to 12. Albanian Kosovans, who are in the majority in the Serbian province

of Kosovo, attended the funerals of 10 men killed in a week-end of surging violence.

Elsewhere in the province a car carrying a Japanese diplomat was raked with fire, wounding the driver.

The Greek defence minister, Akis Tolatzopoulos said: "Kosovo is like a grenade. If the pin is pulled more it will explode."

Mindful of international criticism, particularly from the United States, that Europe was ineffectual in the Bosnian crisis, EU foreign ministers yesterday formally agreed bans on investment in Serbia and on visas for senior Serbian ministers, and confirmed the UN Security Council's arms embargo agreed last month. The US warned

that further sanctions against Serbia ought to be considered.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, chairing the meeting in Luxembourg, said: "These are important steps and they show the EU taking its duty seriously."

"I find the situation in Kosovo continuously troubling. It is important that we continue to press Belgrade for two things: to stabilise the situation, withdraw the special police to barracks and the use of heavy weapons against the population and to really get going with meaningful talks about an enhanced status for Kosovo."

"Belgrade had better note that the outside world is not going to let this one go. The EU is determined that we are

going to make sure that ethnic confrontation is not allowed to continue in any part of Europe."

Other Balkan states are also concerned about the increase of violence, fearful that it will spread to Albanian groups in neighbouring states. They fear that increased autonomy or independence for Kosovo may lead to pressure for a greater Albania, creating an unstable and impoverished state taking in parts of Macedonia and drawing Greece into the conflict.

The Albanian government too is wary of giving full support to the KLA, whose funding and structure it regards as uncertain.

The six-country international contact group monitor-

ing the crisis — Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the US and Russia — is to meet in Rome tomorrow.

Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav president and Serb strongman, has refused to allow the contact group, headed by former Spanish prime minister Felipe Gonzalez, into Kosovo, but the Kosovans have refused to hold talks with the Serbs without the presence of an international mediator.

In an open letter to the Kosovo leader, Ibrahim Rugova, Ratko Markovic, the Serbian deputy prime minister, issued an invitation to talks today without preconditions. "Everyone should enter dialogue without preconditions and none of the

participants should attempt to prejudge the results," he said.

Hans van den Broek, the EU's foreign affairs commissioner, described last week's referendum on Kosovo as "completely predictable and absolutely unsatisfactory". In a poll boycotted by Kosovo Albanians, 95 per cent of Serbs voted against greater autonomy for the province.

Mr van den Broek said: "There must be international involvement in these negotiations if they are to get anywhere."

"EU member states will be inclined to put up the pressure. Further violence this past week has shown how urgent it is to have a dialogue between the parties."

Albright attacks 'dangerous' mistrust of Middle East foes

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

SIX days before crucial meetings in London, the United States secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, yesterday warned that the Middle East peace process is "going around in circles" and has entered "a period of grave danger".

Mrs Albright is due to hold separate meetings next week with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. US patience is at breaking point and it is hoped that the talks prove a turning point.

The Palestinians are pressuring Washington to go public with its plan to revive the peace process, which hinges on a 13.1 per cent Israeli troop withdrawal from the occupied West Bank. Mr Netanyahu has rejected the figure on security grounds and is wavering between 9 per cent and

11 per cent. The Palestinians have rejected those figures.

Clearly frustrated, Mrs Albright spoke out at a New York dinner in honour of a group that promotes goodwill between Israeli and Arab youths. She said that mutual mistrust meant "we have entered a period of grave danger".

"We face the possibility that the momentum that has been built in the direction of

make the tough choices required to move the peace process along."

In Israel, President Clinton's Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, held a further round of meetings with Mr Arafat and Mr Netanyahu but appeared to make no progress.

State department officials played down prospects of a breakthrough. Spokesman James Rubin described the peace process as "increasingly moribund" and said the obstacles to progress remained serious.

Mrs Albright has warned repeatedly that she may have to wind up the US's current mediation efforts if there is no prospect of a breakthrough next week, but she has not made clear what Washington's next steps would be.

The US vice-president, Al

Gore, who will arrive in Israel for its jubilee celebrations on Thursday, is expected to try his hand at mediation.

Challenged on his refusal to budge by a few more percentage points on troops withdrawal, Mr Netanyahu denied his hands were being tied by rightwing coalition partners who support Israeli settlers in the occupied territories.

"The authority only if it was allowed to resist Israeli occupation, he said.

"The authority now is another form of occupation... It is an authority within the authority of the occupation [Israel] which controls our people and country," Sheikh Yassin said.

"The Palestinian Authority, through security co-operation with Israel, wants to mar the image of the [Hamas] movement and to destroy its fighters. Therefore, we reject this approach which only serves Israeli interests," he said.

Hamas, the main domestic opposition to Mr Arafat's self-rule administration, has killed scores of Israelis since the Israeli-Palestinian peace deals it opposes were signed.

Relations between Hamas and Mr Arafat have plunged to a new low since the killing of the master bomb-maker of the organisation's military wing. Last week Mr Arafat refused to meet Sheikh Yassin in Saudi Arabia, where he had been receiving medical treatment.

"It's not a coalition problem... security is the issue," he said.

Meanwhile, the founder of the militant Islamist group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, described the Palestinian Authority as an Israeli tool and pledged further attacks on Israeli targets.

Hamas would co-operate with Mr Arafat's Palestinian

US and Britain fight calls to ease Iraq sanctions

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

THE United States and Britain last night led demands for the automatic renewal of punitive United Nations sanctions against Iraq as pressure mounted for relief after almost seven years.

Their resolve came as Iraq's foreign minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, appealed to the UN Security Council after it heard a report by the chief UN weapons inspector, Richard Butler.

Mr al-Sahhaf told the New York Times that support for the embargo was weakening — "whether the Americans like it or not".

Against a background of intensifying propaganda before the first sanctions review for nearly a year, Baghdad announced it was cutting rations. And opposition sources charged that Saddam Hussein, celebrating his 51st birthday today, had carried out more mass executions.

Mr Butler reported last week that after months of

Iraqi attempts to disrupt the work of the UN Special Commission (Unscm) there had been "virtually no progress in verifying disarmament". Unscm has to certify that Iraq has dismantled any remaining banned weapons before sanctions can be lifted.

Iraq again insisted yesterday it has no such weapons left and lambasted the US and Britain for using "immoral and inhumane" methods to delay implementation of the expanded "oil-for-food" deal allowing the purchase of more humanitarian supplies.

Washington and London blame Baghdad for holding up the arrangements, arguing that President Saddam will find it harder to control his people if the UN is more actively involved in food distribution.

But the Anglo-American hard line was being challenged yesterday with increasing force by Russia, which wants to acknowledge that Iraq has co-operated fully in revealing its nuclear arms, though more information is needed about

its chemical and biological capabilities.

US and British diplomats are concerned that this idea may win enough support within the 15-member council for Russia to pass a formal resolution. This could be vetoed though that would deal a severe blow to the international unity that Washington and London are finding hard to maintain. France joined Russia, saying Iraq had taken important steps to scrap nuclear weapons and long-range missiles and that Paris wanted the number of inspections reduced.

Yesterday's review was the first since the confrontation between Iraq and the UN which ended in February with an agreement between Saddam and the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

Iraq's exiled Communist Party said that in February the government had transferred 3,800 detainees to underground dungeons in the notorious Abu Ghraib prison. Thousands of criminals are expected to be freed today to mark President Saddam's birthday.

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Neo-Nazi success shifts focus of German politics

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANY'S general election campaign is poised to shift to a rightwing agenda stressing immigration and law and order as a result of the rightwing extremist triumph in an east German poll at the weekend.

As the political elite reeled from the impact of the German People's Union's (DPU) entry into the Saxony-Anhalt parliament with 13 per cent of the vote, mainstream politicians urged more emphasis on a crime crackdown to undercut the neo-Nazi appeal.

Theo Waigel, the finance minister and head of the Christian Social Union, sister party to Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU), said: "Aside from jobs, the CDU needs to put more stress on internal security, immigration and crime policies..."

The CDU has been doing this for some time already and we feel that course is justified by the result in Saxony-Anhalt."

His party colleague, Erwin Huber, spoke of the need to defend the national interest, proposing a more euro-sceptic line in the months ahead.

"We must make it clear it is

our job to keep on defending national interests in Europe. This awareness of national issues must be put even more in the foreground," he said.

The outcome of Sunday's election highlighted the gulf between east and west Germany eight years after reunification.

The liberal Free Democrats (FDP), in coalition government nationally with Mr Kohl, and the Greens, tipped for a future coalition with the Social Democrats, failed to muster enough votes to enter the Saxony-Anhalt parliament.

Media commentators, immigrant and Jewish leaders, and business executives all voiced alarm at the Magdeburg outcome.

"A black Sunday for all democrats," the bestselling Bild tabloid said.

"What could emerge in the next two, three or five years could be very dangerous," said Ignatz Bubis, the leader of Germany's Jewish community.

In his electioneering, Mr Kohl has stressed repeatedly that Britain attracts eight times more dollar investment than Germany. But business leaders warned the Saxony-Anhalt result would further deter foreign investors.

elections in September and described the DPU as "completely unacceptable".

The hard left Party of Democratic Socialism took 20 per cent while the DPU took 13 per cent, meaning that a third of the Magdeburg parliament has fallen to the two extremes.

Helmut Kohl: extreme-right party is 'unacceptable'

fiction, and raised questions about Mr Kohl's policies in the east, where unemployment is double the rate in the west.

The chancellor dismissed talk of him standing down from his campaign to secure a fifth term in office in national

'I was no hero' says Poland's famous spy on first visit home

Nell Bowdler in Warsaw

POLAND'S most renowned cold-war spy made an emotional return yesterday, ending more than 16 years in exile in the United States.

Ryszard Kuklinski, a colonel in the Communist-era Polish People's Army, passed 35,000 documents to US intelligence from the early 1970s until 1981.

Pentagon officers have credited him for alerting the West to Soviet bloc contingency plans for a non-nuclear attack on Western Europe in the 1970s and preparations for the Red Army to suppress the Solidarity trade union in 1980.

Appearing with the prime minister, Jerzy Buzek, in Warsaw, Mr Kuklinski said his return marked for him the end of a 25-year journey to a free Poland.

Defending his decision to spy on the army he served, he said espionage was the only tool available in the 1970s with which to break the Soviet Union's grip on Poland. "I was not a hero but an ordinary soldier who wanted to fulfil his duty to his fatherland."

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Backlash in Germany

The right's might is subtle

CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl won his last two general elections in the East, where he gathered in the votes which made up for poorer results in what used to be West Germany. He may well lose the next general election there for the opposite reason. The huge vote in the Saxony-Anhalt elections for the former communists and, above all, for the far right DVU, or German Peoples Party, is a dismal news for the Christian Democrats. The DVU got the same number of votes that the CDU lost, suggesting that the extreme right could destroy Chancellor Kohl's chances in the national voting this September. As always with extreme right breakthroughs of this kind, there are two reactions. First, the reassuring thought that special circumstances — unemployment, the plight of former East Germany, the abstract nature of Kohl's historical appeals — account for a phenomenon which is still a long way from the point at which it could become a real problem. Even if Kohl loses the September elections it will not be to the DVU, but to the perfectly sensible Social Democrats, who will carry forward the main lines of Kohl's policy on Europe and monetary union, and will take over the task of integrating the former GDR. A majority of the citizens of Saxony-Anhalt cast their votes for the mainstream right and left, the CDU and the SPD, or for the former communist party which has liberal views on race, immigration, and crime. (Although voters for that party tend to be reactionary

on those same issues and some could easily shift to the far right.) The other reaction concentrates not on the formal power position but on the diffusion of vicious ideas. Even though parties like the DVU may not have the remotest chance of getting into national government, what they are capable of doing is to shift the country's political agenda toward the hazy and dangerous zone of emotion-driven politics. In that zone, real problems of unemployment and crime, which arise from complex changes in the economy and society, are falsely laid at the door of foreigners. Real difficulties of national identity, which arise from the different histories of the two halves of Germany and from the rush toward European union which Kohl has been leading, are to be solved, somehow, by the slogan Germany for the Germans. What was the most immediate consequence of the CDU's misfortune in Saxony-Anhalt? It was the sight of Theo Waigel, minister of finance and head of the CDU's Bavarian sister-party, arguing that the coalition partner had not put enough stress on immigration, crime, and law and order issues. This in one of the most orderly of countries and after an election in a state with a tiny proportion of foreigners. Nor are these new themes for the CDU, which has been edging in this direction for a long time, and nor is the SPD all that far behind. Britain has its own law and order neuroses. Politicians in all countries are tempted to play the game of substituting apparently tangible problems like immigration, which can be physically controlled, or crime, which can be "tackled" by increasing the number of policemen, for real problems like the international relocation of industry and the difficulties of making international political institutions work, which they do not know what to do about. It

would be paradoxical if the 1998 general election campaign in Germany, which is supposed to be about the creation of a Europe in which nationality will matter far less than before, should turn out to be about how to keep Germany as German as it can possibly be kept.

Drugs realism

But prevention costs money

ARE WE growing up? Yesterday's response to the white paper on drug misuse saw MPs from all three main parties supporting the broad thrust of the Government's approach with its new emphasis on education and treatment. There is good reason for Tories to back Labour's 10-year plan because it builds on the last Government's strategy of "Tackling Drugs Together". Even the tabloids are becoming more serious. True, the Mail still had a shock horror front-page splash on Saturday ("Children of Six to Get Drugs Lessons") but its editorial recognised that, deeply regrettable though the end of innocence might be, the war against drugs was being lost and more was needed than just a crackdown on pushers. In a world in which half of all young people aged between 16 and 25 have tried illegal drugs, even tabloid editors must realise that a war on drugs is a war on their own children. The police have been far ahead of politicians in recognising the importance of diverting young people caught using illegal drugs from the criminal justice system. Better drug education is crucial for the oldest law and order principle in the book: prevention is cheaper and much more effective than punishment. Treatment is the second best option, yet only 1 out of 5 of the 200,000 serious addicts

are in rehabilitation programmes. Two-thirds of our present drug misuse programme is spent on enforcement and less than a third on education and training. These ratios must be reversed. Ever increasing misuse is not inevitable. The numbers can be constrained and even reversed. Keith Hellawell, the Drug Tsar, should be congratulated on his analysis. He is fully aware of the threats that drugs pose and the complex nature of the problem: the disproportionate number of boys (3 out of 4 addicts are male); the need to reduce re-offending; and the need to provide vulnerable children (truant, excluded pupils, children in care, the homeless and children of parents who misuse drugs) with more protection. His plans for an annual audit and specific targets for agencies are long overdue. There's a clear message to concentrate on the drugs which cause most harm: heroin and cocaine. What was missing was a serious ministerial commitment to spending more resources. All that was on offer was the diversion of "a proportion" of the £5 million profits, seized annually from drug traffickers, for investment in prevention. The rest awaits the Government's spending review. Ministers' figures suggest drug misuse now costs over £4 billion with over half of all crime having a drug-related element. Big problems need big resources. Small investments produce small impacts.

The role of Latin

It should support other tongues

THE STUDY of Latin in Britain has been in decline for decades. The number of schoolchildren studying it to GCSE level has dropped by nearly 80 per cent during the past 40 years to under 12,000 today. Al-

though there are some interesting experiments designed to rekindle interest at the primary school level and on the internet (not to mention Finland's weekly broadcasts in Latin), the language of our conquerors doesn't stand much chance these days against the insatiable demands of the national curriculum. What would you leave out to make room for Latin in the classroom if there was a national desire for it — information technology, economics, media studies? Things are not much better in Italy, where a conference in Naples last weekend tried to explore ways of reversing a decline which has made the language virtually extinct even inside the Vatican (as the Pope has admitted). When the mayor of Rome invited citizens to compose witty epigrams in Italian or Latin, only "one or two" were in Latin. There are still optimists around like the Vatican's chief Latin scholar who told the conference that he hoped Latin would become the common language of a united Europe — but stuff like that doesn't boil too many sprouts in Brussels.

Latin isn't really dead, it lives on — like the tributaries of a river — in the dozens of rustic dialects (later languages) into which it metamorphosed after the fall of Rome. Only the Church, the law and some universities continued with it in an official way. People should understand where their language has come from. English, while not as Latin-based as the Romance languages, does have strong influences. Anyone wanting to study Latin should be able to and the study of Latin influences should be part of the teaching of other languages. But don't jump too far. Britain's real priority is not to teach students an old tongue that may help them to understand a number of modern ones, but to get them to study any foreign language at all.

Letters to the Editor

Culture corner: smelling a rat

BERNARD Weinraub (How the rat pack bit off more than they could chew, G2, April 24) is a little credulous to take the quote from director Rob Cohen at face value to emphasise the Rat Pack's alleged place outside the American mainstream. "They were ethnic... Italians and a black and a Jew. They didn't look like Tab Hunter or Rock Hudson." Is Italian somehow more "ethnic" than the Germanic origins of Hunter and Hudson (né Kelm and Scherer respectively). Can you only be ethnic if your complexion is not quite white? Isn't it cheating to say "and a black and a Jew" when they were both Sammy Davis Junior? And I thought Dino looked a lot like Rock Hudson, actually. John Dean, Oxford.

TITANIC, "probably the most overrated film of this or any other year" (Pass the popcorn, G2, April 23). Without wishing to offend Derek Malcolm, Gosh With The Wind is far and away the worst of the films on that charge, with Casablanca, Reservoir Dogs and half Woody Allen's oeuvre also on my come-on-it's-not-that-great list. Sorry. Victor Field, London.

LOOK forward to hearing the Elisabeth Summerville-triumph reviewed in Andrew Clements' building a library column (April 24) singing the role of Brummelmühle in Wagner's Guntöterdummlammer before long. David Cornsack, London.

Value-laden

THE onslaught of the information age has resulted in an identity crisis for the print media. We're served hot news from 24-hour TV or via the internet. But we don't continue to read newspapers out of some misguided sense of nostalgia; we read them for considered opinion, for comment and analysis. And, apparently, decorating tips. Jonathan Glancy's front page piece on Irvine's wallpaper (April 21) was mildly diverting and I was even prepared to put up with his quaint Cowardisms (my dear). But is this the place for it? The Guardian is still a newspaper; if I want Home and Gardens I'll renew my subscription. Why did an admission of failure from the Red Army Faction, and their subsequent laying down of arms, have to sneak into one column on page 18? It's two weeks since the Irish peace deal — and here we have the Baader-Meinhof gang admitting that they were wrong to have pursued terrorism as a means of political processes. When terrorism seems finally to be on the wane, a piece of Irvine's execrable taste seems about as important and worthwhile as watching wallpaper dry, no matter how expensive. Joe Shraguel, Oxford.

Infectious behaviour

THE report from the Lords science and technology committee on a strategy to check the use of antibiotics is to be welcomed (*Medicine's over-performed miracle*, April 23, and *Letters*, April 23). However, I think infection control should figure prominently. In 1980 my late husband had a hip operation. In his first few days on traction after surgery he developed a pressure sore on his ankle; this went septic and he became dangerously ill with MRSA. He was fortunate in being transferred immediately to a hospital with an infection research laboratory (the first of its kind in Europe, under the aegis of Birmingham University Medical School), where he was treated with the antibiotic Vancomycin — the only drug that could deal with MRSA, but one which has dreadful side effects. He had an extra six years of life, but a life confined to a wheelchair in constant pain, with damage to internal organs, and died from congestive heart failure. My husband's long, infection-induced illness cost the NHS many thousands of pounds. I see little reference in health service plans to the effect of downsizing and pres-

sures on staff time — for example, the luxury of time to wash hands between different patients on a busy ward. The Lord's committee's call for a higher priority for basic hygiene in hospitals is of fundamental importance. Elizabeth Ogden, Birmingham. OUR busy Manchester practice has struggled to convince patients that many conditions for which they seek antibiotics do not respond to them — minor sore throats, colds, other viral infections. But often it is less stressful to reach for the prescription pad — particularly when the patient's body language shouts "I don't believe a word you're saying". At last, we have some government support for our educational efforts. Dr Margaret Cant, Manchester. JOHN Gray says (Free the G2, April 24): "When scientists are divided in this way government must take a decision of principle." Surely that is exactly what the Government has done. Where one group of scientists says something is dangerous and another says it is not, the principled position must be to err on

the side of caution. If scientists later prove high dosages of vitamin B6 are safe, the tablets could go back on sale. Dennis Lane, Kettering, Northants. JOHN Gray talks about an "increasing taste for freedom" ignored by the "nanny state". Surely freedom means freedom from fear, even nutritional fear. It's hard to believe that a sizeable proportion of these 2.5 million cautious adults do not have a perfectly adequate diet and do not need these vitamins. Peter Campbell, London. AS A pharmacist I find it difficult to agree with the time as the Government is planning to restrict availability of Vitamin B6 — deficiency of which in expectant mothers causes elevated levels of dental caries in their offspring — it is proposing in the public health green paper to add fluoride to drinking water. The same arguments John Gray voices for pyridoxine apply equally to fluoride, for which evidence continues to accumulate verifying its toxicity. Paul Cline, Liverpool.



Ups and downs of National Parks

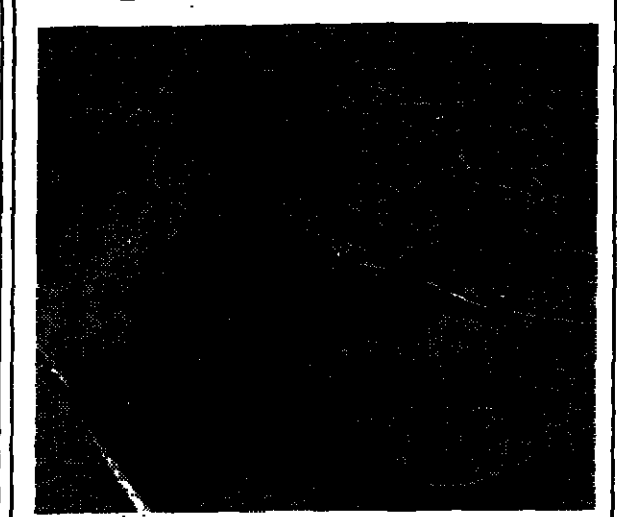
YOUR leader (April 24) suggests the Society of Sussex Downsists is opposed to National Park status for the South Downs. Although we have some misgivings about the National Park label, we are not at all happy with the Countryside Commission recommendations that the South Downs should merely be its Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation. The Society has said that whatever mechanism is used to set up a new South Downs body, it should be a permanent authority, should attract guaranteed central government funding at a level equivalent to

Begging for crumbs from Blunkett's sandwich lunch

WHAT does David Blunkett expect to hear from such disgruntled Tory reactionaries as Tim Collins and David Ruffley (Blunkett drafts in Tory right, April 27)? No doubt that "trendy" teaching methods are to blame for "declining standards", that we need more selection, more support for grant-maintained schools and a good dollop of scorn and rebuke for inner-city schools which, still deprived of resources, are desperately trying to cope with educating the impoverished and underprivileged children of a generation decimated by the likes of Collins and Ruffley. It is the children and parents who, through lack of resources, cannot hop across London to select high-achieving pseudo-private schools that David Blunkett needs to "include"; the people who, desperate to arrest Tory assaults on our education system, voted Labour in the mistaken belief that the Party still believed in equality for all in edu-

cation — not in the circus of testing and shaming and the reactionary rehabilitation of failed 1960s teaching methods. Dr Adam Fagot, London. WHAT a shame the Guardian was short of a serious front page splash on Monday. Sorry to disappoint your excitable headline writers, but there is no Blunkett alliance with the Tory right. We are inviting every English backbencher to join ministers at the Department for Education and Employment for a sandwich lunch to discuss issues related to schools and the New Deal that may affect their constituents. I make no apology for inviting MPs of all parties to such a discussion, but it may interest your readers to know that the opportunity has so far been taken up by over 50 Labour MPs and just a handful of opposition MPs. David Blunkett MP, Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

STARVATION IN SUDAN



This is Menute. He is one of a third of a million people at risk from starvation today in southern Sudan. Desperate for food, Menute cradles his baby as he has collected what he will then boil and eat. It will have no nutritional value. Every day in Sudan too many children like Menute die needlessly — from starvation, disease or exhaustion. They urgently need food, clean water and medical attention. Please help them. Just £30 will buy a Family Survival Kit, containing shelter materials, cooking pots, blankets, soap and other essential items. Please give whatever you can, today.

Yes, I want to help families survive in Sudan
I want to give £30 £50 £100 £250 Other £
☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to World Vision OR
☐ Please debit my Access/Visa/MasterCard/Amex/Discover/NovusCard (tick one)
Signature _____ Expiry Date _____
Title _____ Forename _____ Surname _____
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Complete coupon and return to: Freepost World Vision (no stamp required)
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Smelly Dome

YOU report (Gases made 1990s hottest in 600 years, April 23) that human-made increases in greenhouse gases are warming the planet. Yet more evidence, then, of the need for action to prevent a human and ecological catastrophe in the 21st century. So how unfortunate that the Millennium Dome is due to contain seven tonnes of American HFC134a (a greenhouse gas 1,300 times more powerful than CO2), while leading British alternative technologies are ignored by Peter Mandelson. It looks like Mr Blair will be endorsing a Global Warming Experience rather than showcasing Britain's best environmental technologies. What will Euan think? Chris Rose, Greenpeace UK, London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. The Country Diary is on page 10.

It's a lottery

YOUR report (Threat to hot-line for abused women, April 27) raises questions already posed by Sane about its own unsuccessful bids to the National Lottery Charities Board for Saneline, the national mental health helpline. Only last week, having given out £800 million of punters' money, did the board announce that it will be prepared to give limited reasons to those who fail. But this still does not change the fundamental flaw within the system used to assess applications. Currently there is no consideration in terms of duplication of applications either by cause or by location. More importantly, there is no assessment of whether any charity is fulfilling a real need within society, and so we get the less popular causes, such as mental health and abused women, being left out in the cold. The National Lottery Charities Board simply

makes up their own, somewhat arbitrary criteria which charities must fit, often at great expense, to obtain much needed funding. Something must be done to ensure that essential services do not go to the wall simply because they are not cuddly, fashionable or new. Maxine West, a considerate your report a shabby one. Just a couple of points. The story of her begging for money for her sick son has no credence since the year in which she is supposed to have done so was two years before he was born. The shooting herself-in-the-leg tale attributed to the Garda came from a villain and apparently the Garda are ready to object to it on publication. Charles Haughey's office denies any of the charges against her made in the book and are prepared to do so publicly. When the author of the book was asked why she hadn't spoken to the journalist's family, she said she'd "never got around to it". Nick Cook, Penzance.

Guerin's story

NO doubt Veronica Guerin had her faults (Book debunks murdered Dublin crime journalist, April 27), but having read press reports in Dublin, heard interviews on radio and TV and spoken to those who knew her, I consider your report a shabby one. Just a couple of points. The story of her begging for money for her sick son has no credence since the year in which she is supposed to have done so was two years before he was born. The shooting herself-in-the-leg tale attributed to the Garda came from a villain and apparently the Garda are ready to object to it on publication. Charles Haughey's office denies any of the charges against her made in the book and are prepared to do so publicly. When the author of the book was asked why she hadn't spoken to the journalist's family, she said she'd "never got around to it". Nick Cook, Penzance.

Turn again

IAN Aitken hits a number of nails on the head (It looks as though we're going to get a comedian as mayor of London, April 23). My instinct, as a doorstep participant in London's council elections, is that the Government's decision to stifle real debate on the form of a new London authority may lead to a low turnout in the referendum and a less than authoritative endorsement of the principle. Since Mrs Thatcher abolished the GLC in 1986 over 70 per cent of Londoners have consistently told pollsters that they want some form of authority restored. The real debate should have been about whether they want a directly elected assembly with all the obvious safeguards built in, or a directly elected mayor. Instead Labour are asking us all to support an unhealthy combination of the two real alternatives in a mayor and an assembly. The voters seem to be scarcely aware of the referendum. Without any campaign or debate I fear they may not bother to vote. If they don't, Labour may have killed the whole concept. Adrian Slade, London.

Victims take exception to bullying defence tactics

DEA Birkett comes close to laying blame for bullying on the victim (In defence of the bully, *Weekend Guardian*, April 25). My daughter, sweet-natured, loving and trusting, encountered a bully at infant and junior school who would pick on various girls in order to dominate play and school work. For instance, when my daughter progressed further at maths than J, J would hide her maths book until she caught up. The teachers must have had some inkling of this behaviour because they recommended that, as the local com-

prehensive was a six-form entry, the five victims and one bully should each different forms. My daughter confronted J some years later about her domineering behaviour, but J denied it had been abnormal, claiming it was just "play". J is now training to be a nursery teacher. Let's hope she turns out to be a benevolent dictator. Melanie Kingsbury, Nottingham. I WAS bullied on and off until I was about 13. Until the day I left school after my A-levels, I

lived in fear that one day those girls would decide that my hair was wrong, my clothes were sad, or my academic achievement too good. Now at the end of my second year at university, I still find it difficult to trust people and I don't try my best academically in case it starts again. I think about ending it all as all I can see is an endless struggle to regain my self-esteem. Articles like Birkett's that claim bullying is normal serve only to ease the conscience of the bullies and to make sure that the horror continues. Name and address supplied.

DEA Birkett tells us that she was a bully, and it never did her any harm. Mental cruelty, she asserts, should never be punished because there is a bully in all of us. Some of us choose not to bully, whatever our atavistic instincts. Some of us choose to treat others as we wish to be treated. Tim Hutchinson, Ilkeston, Derbyshire. WHAT next: "In defence of the Nazi?" Gurnon Tansie, Cambridge.

Tuesday April 28 1998

Tomorrow: Trouble at the bank

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Finance Guardian

11

From Tokyo to London, sell-off signals that bull run may have ended

Shares slide on fears of rate rise in US

Ian King

FEARS of a rise in US interest rates rattled stock markets across the world yesterday, prompting suggestions that the near 15-year bull run in equities is about to come to an end.

Following overnight falls in Japan and Hong Kong, European stock markets — which have had a record run this year in pre-EMU euphoria — fell by between 2 and 6 per cent, while bonds also finished sharply lower.

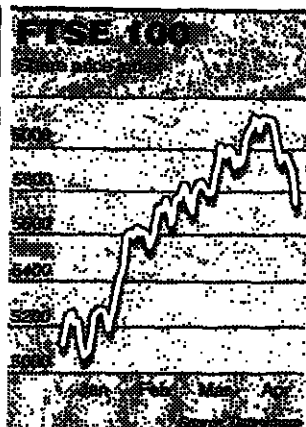
Worst hit among European bourses was the Italian stock market, which fell by nearly 7 per cent, leaving small investors — who pumped more cash into mutual funds last month than did their American counterparts — bruised.

The German, French, Belgian and Scandinavian stock markets all slumped, while in London, the FTSE 100 index fell 141.5 points to 5722.4. However, the FTSE Mid-250 index of medium-size companies and the FTSE Small-Cap index suffered only modest falls, reflecting their exclusion from this year's bull run.

The biggest fallers were in the banking and finance sectors where, despite an outbreak of takeover fever after the recent big US banking mergers, there has been little industry consolidation.

On Wall Street, the key long bond fell sharply on worries about interest rates and the Dow Jones Industrial index plunged by more than 200 points in early trading, while the Nasdaq index, which specialises in technology stocks such as Microsoft and Intel, fell even more sharply.

Analysts said the sell-off had been prompted by a report in the Wall Street Journal that America's central bank, the Federal Reserve, was starting to move towards a tighter monetary policy. However, equity strategists



In London said the fears had been around for some time, arguing that the Foolsie had merely been caught in the crossfire.

They also pointed out that, after a record first quarter this year, financial institutions were taking the opportunity to lock in some profits.

Tim Huddart, of US-owned broker Merrill Lynch — which accounts for one in four of all shares traded on the London market — said: "The market has suddenly woken up to the fact that US economic data has been consistently strong and that the next move in US interest rates might be up instead of down."

Mr Huddart said there were several other bearish indicators coming from the US, in particular that American directors had turned net sellers of shares in their companies.

He suggested that a rate rise would help "lance the boil". He warned, however, that continental European markets, fuelled by lower interest rates ahead of economic and monetary union, could have further to fall.

"The euro timetable is fact, and is coming fast, but one or two people are now starting to question whether it's a good thing."

Other analysts were



Headaches galore... A trader on the Milan Stock Exchange gets that sinking feeling

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCA BRUNO

equally gloomy about prospects for the British stock market. Richard Jeffrey, head of equity strategy at the stockbroker Charterhouse Tilney, said the fall showed that the market was still worried about the possibility that the British economy, like that of the US, was not necessarily poised for a "soft" landing.

Mr Jeffrey, who expects the

FTSE 100 to fall to 5200 by the end of the year, added: "The possibility of an increase in US interest rates has been coming through and, while equity markets on both sides of the Atlantic had been looking forward to a smooth landing, higher interest rates mean that may not necessarily be the case."

"I'm not so sure that the UK

economy is slowing down that much — yes, some manufacturers are having a hard time, but the construction industry and the services industry are still very strong. The classic end-of-cycle signs are still there."

Meanwhile, small investors were urged last night to hold tight, with the Share Centre, a retail stockbroker, suggest-

ing that some bargain-hunters could start to emerge. Chief executive Gavin Oldham said: "The private investor should always take some profits when feeling bearish and will be best advised to stay in cash until the dust settles. But at this stage it is best to hold steady, as this movement is more of an adjustment than anything else."

Notebook

Markets are in the mood for change



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE disclosure by the Wall Street Journal that the next move in US interest rates is likely to be up rather than down may prove to be a decisive moment for bond and equity markets.

Serious changes in the mood of financial markets are almost always heralded by changes in interest rates. It was clear at the recent financial gatherings in Washington that concern has been growing at the G7 and IMF about the bubble in equity prices and there was no shortage of experts willing to bet on a correction.

A move down of 20 per cent from the peaks seen on the Dow Jones and the FTSE this year could almost certainly be engineered without causing permanent damage to confidence in the real economy. Anything above 20 per cent would suggest that the long bull market and the famous Goldilocks economy of the 1990s could be over.

There will be a tendency among market operators to see the current falls on the FTSE — down 141.5 points — and the Dow Jones as a temporary phenomenon with the froth coming off the top.

But there are longer-range problems in the Anglo-Saxon economies. These include the sharp deterioration in the current account balances of the US and the UK, largely as a result of the strong value of their currencies but also worsened by events in Asia which is selling cheap goods into strong Western economies.

The best way for central bankers such as the Federal Reserve to tackle this is to tighten policy and slow demand, although in the first instance these can put further upward pressure on the exchange rate. The Fed seems to have crossed the Rubicon at its March 31 session. Hopes that the UK's monetary policy committee may have come to the end of its tightening cycle could be threatened.

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anese economy will lead to a worsening of the crisis in Asia and could rapidly impinge on growth in the other G7 countries.

The managing director, Michel Camdessus, who is learning how to play the hard cop again after his softly-softly approach was seen as inadequate in East Asia, was insistent in Paris that the proposed \$126 billion fiscal package cannot just be a one-off. Mr Camdessus wants to see the proposed tax cuts turned into a permanent feature: the IMF fears that they could be emasculated in years two and beyond by already-announced measures to squeeze the budget.

There is a great deal of scepticism among other G7 countries about Japan's forecast that the package will lift growth by 2 per cent this year and by 1.9 per cent in 1999. Even if the tax changes were implemented immediately it is hard to see the effects coming through quickly, particularly in an economy that has traditionally eschewed consumption. Moreover, the slow pace of reforms in a financial system that is recklessly short of qualified bank supervisors has not done much to enhance confidence. It is clear from Paris that the pressure is now on Tokyo: we all have to hope that it is finally listening.

VW assault

THERE could be no bigger contrast between the sale of a Rolls-Royce car and the sale of the business which makes them.

Selling the car is a smooth discrete operation, refined over the years. Flogging the business, however, has become a distinctly grubby affair with corporate rivalry well to the fore.

Vickers, which put Rolls up for sale last year, thought that it had devised a dignified way of disposing of a famous British asset. Its bankers were to conduct a private auction of the business, with exclusive talks with the highest bidder.

But Vickers failed to take account of the bitter corporate and personal rivalry between Germany's BMW and Volkswagen car groups. VW, outbid by BMW during the private auction, is planning to storm back with a higher offer, regardless of the sale process or any agreement Vickers reaches with BMW. If it has to appeal to Vickers' shareholders over the heads of the board, it will.

According to a source close to VW, the supervisory board has given its executives "the wherewithal and the flexibility to achieve their objective". A lot more cash and offers for other parts of Vickers' business are on the agenda.

The Vickers board is caught between its preference for BMW, which makes the engines for the new range of Rolls and Bentley cars, and its duty to get best value for its shareholders. It has got the auction it wanted to secure the best price. But it has failed to achieve an orderly sale and its preferred bidder is likely to be brushed aside by a company with more money to burn.

Japanese angst

THE clean-up inside the Japanese finance ministry and Bank of Japan is fascinating, especially if it leads to a less bureaucratic, speedier and more responsive approach to policy making.

All the reforms are seen as essential if Japan is to pull out of its economic and financial nosedive and convince other industrial countries that it is finally taking aboard criticism.

The doubts can still be heard. The IMF, having been brutally frank about Japan's failings a fortnight ago, has now taken its warnings on to the OECD in Paris. The concern is that a weakening Jap-

Reed Elsevier rebounds with \$1.65bn deal

Simon Beavis
Media Business Editor

REED Elsevier, the acquisitive Anglo-Dutch publisher, swept aside its recent failure to merge with Wolters Kluwer yesterday and marched back on to the takeover trail with a \$1.65 billion (298 million) purchase of two US legal publishers.

The publishing group said that the deal would put it level with Thomson Corp of Canada as the world's biggest provider of specialist legal information.

Despite City murmurs that Reed Elsevier was paying over the odds for the two companies, executives insisted the deal would dilute earnings only mildly in the short term and soon contribute to revenues.

They stressed that their appetite for acquisitions had not been quenched by the deal and they had \$1.2 billion to spend on other professional and business publishing opportunities.

The group is buying the whole of Matthew Bender and Company — the 100-year-old publisher which specialises in legal treatises — and the 50 per cent of Shepard's Company it does not already own. Matthew Bender is wholly owned by Times Mirror, which with Reed Elsevier has

managed Shepard's — the US legal citation business — as a joint venture since 1996.

Both businesses were put up for auction through Goldman Sachs in November, and are thought to have attracted bids from Wolters Kluwer and Thomson as well as financial buyers.

Reed joint chairman Nigel Stapleton said the deal — to be funded two-thirds in cash and a third in debt — would give Reed about 30 per cent of the \$3.5 billion US legal publishing market, compared with the 43 per cent controlled by Thomson.

He described the deal as a "very strong follow-on" to the group's acquisition of the Lexis-Nexis online legal publishing business for \$1.5 billion in 1994.

He admitted that the price being paid was full but said the group was only "reinvesting a little more than" the \$860 million Reed realised from selling its IPC consumer magazines business.

"The cost to us of not doing the deal would have been much higher in terms of putting limits on what we have got in Lexis-Nexis."

He predicted that some \$20 million of savings could be made from acquisition and that the new companies would dilute earnings by about 1 per cent for about one year before contributing to revenues.

Debenhams set for city expansion

Roger Cowe

MILTON Keynes, Oxford and York are among the latest shopping centres to be targeted by Debenhams, which announced plans yesterday for six new stores.

The latest expansion will leave the chain with 100 stores in five years' time, but there will still be leading cities, such as Liverpool, without a Debenhams store.

Chief executive Terry Green said there was scope for a 130-strong group in the UK and he saw no reason to slow down the expansion.

Despite describing the current year as a "testing time" because of the uncertain economic outlook for retailers, he added: "We would have to have a recession to end all recessions to see us holding

our expansion plans. You don't say, 'I'm looking a bit bad, let's not bother' if you did that you could miss an opportunity."

The £235 million programme, including 10 stores announced in December, will add 6,000 new jobs over the next four years. About half of those will be part-time.

Debenhams is also moving abroad, with plans announced yesterday for a franchised store in Reykjavik, Iceland. The first overseas franchise opened in Bahrain last spring will be followed with shops in Kuwait, Jeddah and Dubai over the next two years.

Mr Green was speaking after revealing the company's first financial results since it split from the Burton Group (now known as Arcadia) in January.

Profits of £77 million for the

six months to the end of February were 15 per cent higher than last year after sales grew by nearly 8 per cent to £770 million and the company's shares defied yesterday's stock market fall and rose by nearly 8 per cent.

The profit advance came despite disappointing Christmas trading which resulted in a bumper sale period. Losses on the January sales were compensated by higher profit margins stemming from better buying deals.

Mr Green revealed new contracts with leading designers such as Kelly Hoppen, Eric Van Peterson and Jasper Conran, as well as the launch of new Debenhams brands.

And he said the chain's computerised wedding list service was used for 30,000 weddings last year, making it the leading gift service in the country.

Profits of £77 million for the

Chain reaction

Ten steps to a new Debenhams

1. Reduction of "non-core" units by other companies within stores
2. Development of own labels
3. Concentration on key areas of clothing and home furnishings
4. Development of original presentation techniques
5. Investment in modernisation
6. Reduction of sale periods so more products sold at full price
7. Expansion of the store chain
8. New concepts to replace unprofitable areas such as furniture
9. Investment in training and staff development to improve customer service
10. International expansion

Nationwide scores a home win against Halifax

Rupert Jones

THEY were team-mates before the Halifax became a bank and left its former building society partner, the Nationwide, behind. Now the Nationwide has got its revenge by sponsoring the bank's local football team, Halifax Town.

Nationwide, now Britain's biggest building society following the Halifax's conversion, has also poached the bank's adver-

tising slogan — and is offering to give its new team "a bit extra help" with their first season back in the football league. "Nationwide sponsors Halifax," crowed a society communiqué yesterday.

Five years after they were relegated to the Vauxhall Conference, Halifax Town sealed their return to the Football League with a 2-0 win at Kidderminster. The West Yorkshire club had been looking for a new sponsor for next season and found a willing team-mate

in the Swindon-based building society.

Nationwide will be the club's exclusive shirt sponsor and the deal should guarantee the building society plenty of publicity right under the noses of the Halifax, which still has its head office in the town.

The rivalry between the two intensified following the Halifax's defection from the building society movement last June. Its hugely successful multi-billion pound stock market flotation sparked an at-

tempt to force the Nationwide to do the same. The two giants have simultaneously been at loggerheads over their different assessments of what is happening to UK house prices.

There appears to be some disagreement as to how the sponsorship deal came about. But singing the praises of his club's new benefactor, Halifax Town chairman John Stockwell said everyone was looking forward to working with "the world's No 1 building society".

MI5 gains key to cyber codes

Richard Norton-Taylor

BRTAIN'S security and intelligence agencies are to be given access to encrypted electronic communications used by individuals, companies and banks.

The plan, announced yesterday by Barbara Roche, the trade and industry minister, aims to combat money-laundering, terrorism and international criminals whose use of sophisticated codes has alarmed agencies such as MI5.

In a policy statement on electronic commerce, Mrs Roche also announced a voluntary system of licensed Certification Agencies and Trusted Third Parties (TTTPs) which would provide encryption services to companies trading

through systems such as the Internet.

The proposal is designed to promote the huge potential for electronic commerce. Internet transactions are forecast to reach £23 billion by 2005.

Licensed TTTPs would hold an encryption key for a company or individual, and provide it only to legitimate business partners, ensuring they are communicating only with each other.

The increasing availability of encryption techniques had serious implications for the fight against crime, drug traffickers and terrorism, said Mrs Roche. A law will be tabled giving the intelligence agencies, including the police and Customs, powers to obtain warrants to get access to encryption keys.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.509	Germany 2.5129	Malaysia 6.26	Singapore 2.60
Austria 20.46	Greece 511.75	Malta 0.63	South Africa 8.19
Belgium 60.00	Hong Kong 12.54	Netherlands 3.2607	Spain 245.70
Canada 2.228	India 65.14	New Zealand 2.93	Sweden 13.00
Cyprus 0.85	Ireland 1.1522	Norway 12.13	Switzerland 2.42
Denmark 11.16	Israel 6.24	Portugal 257.76	Turkey 387.370
Finland 8.21	Italy 2.896	Saudi Arabia 6.13	USA 1.8284
France 6.73			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shekel and mollar)

12 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

Murdoch's satellite customers will be allowed to receive Channel 3 only in its analogue form

ITV firms declare digital war on Sky

Chris Barrie, Media Business Correspondent

BITAIN'S ITV companies are declaring war on British Sky Broadcasting by refusing to allow the satellite broadcaster to broadcast their main channels in its digital TV package.

ITV executives have decided not to allow Sky to broadcast Channel 3, the national ITV service available now in analogue form and due to be broadcast simultaneously in digital later this year.

The result is that Sky customers who pay for its satellite digital services will only get the ITV channel in analogue form — with pictures and sound that are in digital — by switching out of

Sky's digital service and back into analogue TV.

Nor will ITV allow Sky to transmit ITVs, the new digital-only channel which will be available free to customers receiving terrestrial television via digital TV sets or a set-top box supplied by British Digital Broadcasting — the joint venture owned by Carlton and Granada and licensed to transmit digital terrestrial TV.

The move follows the BBC's decision to pay Sky to transmit the corporation's services on digital satellite.

One senior ITV executive said: "We all need to limit the increase in digital satellite television, not encourage it."

He added that Sky was keen to present itself as the one-stop shop of the TV industry, offering subscribers many channels and an inclusive service. ITV's decision, he

said, meant Sky would still be an "add-on" service.

The decision, coupled with aggressive pricing plans revealed yesterday for their digital service, marks a sharp increase in the hostilities that already exist between Rupert Murdoch's satellite TV empire and terrestrial commercial giants such as Michael Green's Carlton Communications and Lord Eshelby's United News and Media.

Channel 5, by contrast, has opted for digital satellite transmission to increase its patchy coverage. Channel 4 is putting only its pay TV services on to satellite.

Ian West, Sky director of digital and business development, yesterday told the BBC conference on digital TV in London that there were difficulties in persuading ITV to broadcast via satellite, but

they would be ironed out. The split became apparent as Nigel Walmsley, chairman of Carlton Television and a director of BDB, pledged to drive digital TV into middle England by offering a complete package of 12 channels for under £10 a month.

Mr Walmsley said BDB would aim to undercut Sky's basic package and some of the cable packages introduced recently that offer a small number of channels at low cost, a marketing ploy that is revitalising cable subscriber numbers.

The strategy follows the conviction held by Michael Green, Carlton chairman, that price will be vital in persuading more households to pay for television.

BDB estimates that there are 17 million homes without multi-channel TV, and that 11 million of these "virgins" are

prepared to pay providing the price is right — "middle England looking for value for money".

Mr Walmsley said market research showed that 8 million homes do not want a satellite dish on the roof, while 7 million felt the current options were too expensive. Meanwhile 13 million homes are in streets that have yet to be cabled.

BDB's equipment would be simplest to install — "plug in and play" — and attractive to three-quarters of homes without multi-channel TV.

The cost of the set-top box would also be critical. The box, needed to convert today's TV set into one capable of receiving digital signals, will sell to 8 million homes if priced at £200, rising to 11 million and 14 million if the price tag falls to £150 and £100 respectively.

Outlook for digital TV

How we compare
Cable and satellite market penetration, western Europe

Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany
75% or more

Austria, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland
40% - 74%

Spain, Italy, UK, Greece, France
Below 40%

Expected
Digital technology penetration by 2000

34%

58%

Lower scenario 90%

Higher scenario 100%

Sayonara to sake, sushi and geisha sleaze

Dolce vita Japanese style may become a thing of the past after crackdown on corporate entertainment

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo and Dan Atkinson

MORE than 100 top bureaucrats at Japan's powerful Ministry of Finance yesterday became the latest victims of a backlash against the wining, dining and bribery of top officials by wealthy corporate interests.

Finance minister Hikaru Matsunaga said 112 of his staff will be punished for accepting excessive entertainment from banks, brokerage and insurance companies they were supposed to be supervising.

"We decided to impose severe punishment because we found there was excessive contact between the officials and private financial institutions," said Mr Matsunaga, announcing the results of the investigation of more than 1,000 officials.

The disciplinary action follows similar moves earlier this month by the other pivotal institution implicated in the "excessive entertainment" scandal, the Bank of Japan, where 98 central bank officials were penalised.

The prohibition on gifts and entertainment is now spreading into the non-financial sector. Earlier this month motor group Nissan wrote to about 300 companies with which it does business asking them to cease wining, dining and otherwise entertaining Nissan personnel.

"It has been widely pointed out that the Japanese custom of offering entertainment and gifts has become excessive," the letter, signed by Nissan president Yoshikazu Kawanaka, says. "From now on, we would like you please to refrain from giving gifts, banquets and golf trips."

Evidence of the awesome ability of Japan's top officials and businessmen to party all night long has been trickling out of the country since the end of the 1980s, with tales of heroic sake consumption and late-night karaoke sessions.

But it was the collapse in November of Yamaichi Securities — one of Japan's top four brokers — that helped bring to the surface the darker side of the senior "salarymen" —



Last orders at a geisha co-operative. Now the entertainment bill is being curbed

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL WOLF



'We decided to impose severe punishment because we found there was excessive contact between officials and private institutions'

Finance minister Hikaru Matsunaga (left)



tainment of bureaucrats: the Loran "no-pan shabu shabu" restaurant in Tokyo's notorious Kabukicho red-light district, where civil servants were treated with costly paper-thin slices of beef served by knicker-less waitresses.

Once the public might have turned a blind eye to what is still being excused in some quarters as a unique Japanese way of doing business which has delivered the economic goods. The problem is that it is delivering no more, and those who have suffered from the economic lethargy of the 1990s are no longer prepared to tolerate the gourmet lifestyles and sexual predilections of the men from the ministry or the bank.

As a result, Tokyo's night fever has cooled. "While the country prospered, the finance ministry was given the credit and a certain degree of entertainment was regarded as acceptable," noted one senior politician in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. "But now that the economy is in trouble, the ministry has fallen off its pedestal and its wining and dining culture is seen as a core problem facing the country."

West leans on Japan to take further action

Mark Atkinson in Paris

WESTERN governments called on Japan yesterday to take further action against the economic crisis sweeping Asia.

Ministers from the 29-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, meeting in Paris, welcomed the package launched by the Japanese government on Friday as a step in the right direction but said that Japan should do more to boost domestic demand.

Japan announced a tax cut spending plan valued at 16.65 trillion yen (£76 billion), including 4 trillion yen in temporary income tax cuts and 7.7 trillion yen in public works spending. As the biggest economy in Asia, Japan is seen as the key to a turnaround in the region's fortunes.

Treasury minister Helen Liddell said: "The key message that we need from Japan is one of determination to implement the package."

News in brief

France vetoes new EU-US trade talks

FRANCE yesterday vetoed a proposal for a major new round of EU-US trade liberalisation talks. French European Affairs Minister Pierre Moscovici said Paris opposed the idea of a "new transatlantic marketplace" while trade talks with Washington remain unresolved. Key among these is legislation to punish Europeans for trading with Cuba, Iran and Libya.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, had hoped to put the idea of new trade talks to Mr Clinton in London next month. "France has reiterated its opposition to this," Mr Moscovici said outside a meeting of EU foreign ministers at which he issued his veto. As putting the idea to Mr Clinton "needs unanimity among the EU nations, this will now not happen," he said.

The EC had proposed talks in four areas: the removal of technical trade barriers, such as incompatible product standards; eliminating industrial tariffs; free trade in services; and more open markets in investment, public procurement and intellectual property.

To make that possible, France and some other European nations, EU Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan had suggested leaving farm and audiovisual goods outside the talks.

Commercial Union rapped

A SUBSIDIARY of insurance group Commercial Union has been reprimanded by the Financial Services Authority for misleading advertising. This is the first time a company has been disciplined in this way for breaking the regulator's rules on advertising.

The offending advertisement — for a "Win Win" personal equity plan offered by investment firm Advance Call — used past performance figures "in a way which was capable of being misleading", the FSA said. — *Rupert Jones*

Bonus bonanza for Mulcahy

SIR Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive of the retail group Kingfisher, was paid nearly £1.4 million last year — and could have had more. In common with other UK-based executive directors, he received a bonus which determines the bonus, he should have received 123 per cent of salary. The board remuneration committee decided, however, that it should be restricted to 100 per cent, despite the group's outstanding performance. Profits rose by a third to £520 million.

Sun Life & Provincial former chief executive Michael Hart earned a total of £289,992 in his last year with the company, which is part of the AXA Group.

Jet partnership ended

BRITISH Aerospace, France's Aerospatiale and Italy's Alenia are to break up their regional jet partnership only three years after it was formed. The companies want to be able to promote their own products themselves rather than depend on a jointly-owned venture. Aero International Regional is expected to be dissolved within the next two weeks.

The move, which comes at a time when the trend in the industry is towards greater consolidation, highlights the difficulties companies from different countries can experience working together. — *Nicholas Barnister*

Domestic and small business gas bills set to rise

Celia Weston, Industrial Correspondent

MILLIONS of domestic and small business gas users could face bigger bills next winter despite high expectations that competition is set to drive prices down. But industrial and commercial customers are set to see their bills cut by up to a third.

Changes to gas transportation charges, due to be introduced this autumn by the monopoly pipeline business Transco, could wipe out the benefits of lower prices from competition and push up average annual household gas bills by £4.20. But some large

industrial users on so-called interruptible contracts — which means their gas can be cut off at times of high demand elsewhere — are set to save thousands of pounds.

The price per therm they will pay is to be cut by 0.2p, or 32 per cent, compared with an increase of 0.7p, or 3 per cent, per therm for domestic users.

Sue Slipman, director of the independent Gas Consumers' Council, said last night that consumers who thought a mild winter meant they could save money "will end up paying more than the level of inflation increase for gas transportation".

Transportation costs account for about 40 per cent of gas bills. The prices charged to

shippers by Transco are subject to control by the industry regulator, Ofgas, but shippers are expected to pass on price changes to customers.

Transco said the price increases meant that collection of the additional £190 million it was entitled to under the present price control would be spread across two years instead of one.

"When the charges come into effect in October, the proposals are for an average increase of 3 per cent. Using the current methodology some consumers will have inflation increases above the rate of inflation, others below," Transco said.

But Ms Slipman said the methodology for calculating

the cost of putting gas through the national pipeline system had clearly shifted in favour of commercial users.

The industry regulator wants to end the practice of commercial users paying the lion's share of costs to keep the gas transportation system in place and to shift the burden more to small business and domestic consumers.

But Ms Slipman said the Government had clearly indicated in its utility regulation green paper that it wanted the gas and electricity regulators to put the interests of energy consumers first. "These price increases mean that the interests of the majority of consumers are not at the heart of regulation," she said.

Throwing light on electricity competition

THE electricity industry watchdog, Ofwat, yesterday launched a £2.5 million advertising and public information campaign to prepare 26 million consumers for the advent of competition in the domestic supply market later this year, writes Celia Weston.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, director-general of Ofwat, said that in addition to a national telephone helpline and 16 fact sheets — on such subjects as safety, billing and doorstep selling — every

household would receive a booklet explaining how competition would affect them.

All the companies likely to be involved in supplying the domestic market are required to sign up to enforceable codes of practice.

Prof Littlechild said: "I am determined to see the benefits of competition extend to all customers as soon as practicable."

But the five-month delay in providing a choice of supplier means that competition will not begin in selected areas until September. Eastern, Manweb, Seaboard, Yorkshire and Scottish Power have been named as the five companies scheduled to open their markets first.

Guardian Tuesday April 28 1998

Options open
or Tamarisk

THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE has reported a record rise in trading volume, with the S&P 500 index up 1.1 per cent to 4,100. The rise was driven by a surge in technology shares, with Intel and Microsoft leading the way. The FTSE 100 also rose, ending the week on a high note.

Bath Jackpot card

NAME	AMOUNT
Mr. J. Smith	£100
Mr. A. Jones	£50
Mr. B. Brown	£25
Mr. C. White	£15
Mr. D. Black	£10
Mr. E. Green	£5
Mr. F. Grey	£2
Mr. G. Gold	£1
Mr. H. Silver	£0.50
Mr. I. Iron	£0.25
Mr. L. Lead	£0.10
Mr. M. Mercury	£0.05
Mr. N. Nickel	£0.02
Mr. O. Copper	£0.01

Results

COMPANY	RESULT
British Airways	Profit up 10%
British Petroleum	Profit down 5%
British Telecom	Profit up 15%
British Steel	Profit down 20%
British Sugar	Profit up 8%
British Airways	Profit up 10%
British Petroleum	Profit down 5%
British Telecom	Profit up 15%
British Steel	Profit down 20%
British Sugar	Profit up 8%

KEEPING TRACK

LOCATION	NUMBER
NOTTINGHAM	771
SCOT (E)	772
WIMBORNE (E)	773
WIMBORNE (E)	774

0891 222 +

THE GUARDIAN

Rugby Union

S Africa row puts tours in doubt

Robert Armstrong

THIS summer's tour to South Africa by England, Ireland and Wales could be called off within a fortnight because of an increasingly bitter conflict between the South African Rugby Football Union and the government. If the SARFU executive committee does not resign en bloc by Thursday week then the South African government will take steps to prevent all incoming tours.

Yesterday Muleki George, president of the government-funded National Sports Council, warned the British and Irish unions: "If the executive don't step down we will ensure the tours are called off."

George's threat puts the Tests between the Springboks and Ireland (twice), Wales and England, scheduled for June 13, 20, 27 and July 4 respectively, at risk. It also raises the prospect of the Springboks entering a new phase of enforced international isolation.

The NSC, a multiracial sports body which enjoys the support of President Nelson Mandela, accuses rugby administrators of failing to erase barriers to black participation at the highest levels. There are no blacks on the national team and only five non-whites among more than 100 players representing four South African regional teams in the Super-12 tournament.

Allegations of racism, corruption and nepotism have led to a tense stand-off between key members of rugby's ruling body and the government. Last week a South African High Court judge turned down a government request for an official inquiry into the running of SARFU but the NSC remains determined to replace SARFU's

nine-man executive committee, including its chairman Dr Louis Luyt.

If the executive stays put, the annual Tri-nations tournament involving New Zealand, Australia and South Africa could also be thrown into disarray. The All Blacks are due to play a Test in Durban on July 15 and Australia expect to meet the Springboks a week later at Johannesburg's Ellis Park, a ground owned by Luyt.

The NSC and the government are angry that a special commission of inquiry into the running of the sport appointed by President Mandela has been snubbed by SARFU which has suggested that it conduct an internal inquiry. "We fail to see how SARFU can carry out the roles of doctor and patient simultaneously," remarked an NSC spokesman who proposes that SARFU be banned from using the Springbok logo.

Ireland, who are due to open their tour on May 30 with a match against Boland, near Cape Town, will seek early clarification of their existing tour arrangements. Both England and Wales have more time: indeed Clive Woodward, the England coach, would probably be delighted to forgo the Test in Cape Town after his squad have completed their tour of Australia and New Zealand.

Yesterday Woodward said he would announce the England squad at Twickenham on May 12, only 16 days before they depart for Brisbane where they play their first Test against Australia on June 6. He refused to comment on the availability of the England captain Lawrence Dallaglio who has said he needs a shoulder operation.

"I will only pick players and a management who are committed to going and are physically fit," he said.

Fitzpatrick bows to knee injury after record 92 All Black caps

THE All Blacks captain Sean Fitzpatrick brought the curtain down on a career that embraced 92 caps when he announced his retirement yesterday. The 34-year-old hooker suffered a knee injury against South Africa last July. He led New Zealand 51 times.

Fitzpatrick had knee surgery prior to the tour of Britain last year but made only brief appearances. He had hoped to return to club rugby this week and was aiming to be fit for the All Blacks trial on June 8. But he admits he cannot run without pain and last week the All Blacks' doctor John Mayhew told him nothing more could be done.

The New Zealand coach John Hart said: "This is a sad day but it should be a celebration of one of the greatest of rugby careers. Sean is, alongside Colin Meads, one of the greatest players we have seen in our time."

He made 347 first-class appearances for Auckland and his country, second only to Meads.

London Marathon

Anton calls for compulsory blood tests to end suspicion

Duncan Mackay

ABEL ANTON, the London Marathon winner, has called for compulsory blood testing to end the suspicions surrounding him and his Spanish team-mates. Accusations that they are using EPO, which stimulates production of red blood cells and increases stamina, surfaced again yesterday at the winner's press conference after Spain finished with three in the top seven of Sunday's race.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation is working with the International Olympic Committee to develop a reliable blood test to replace the current urine test, which cannot detect EPO.

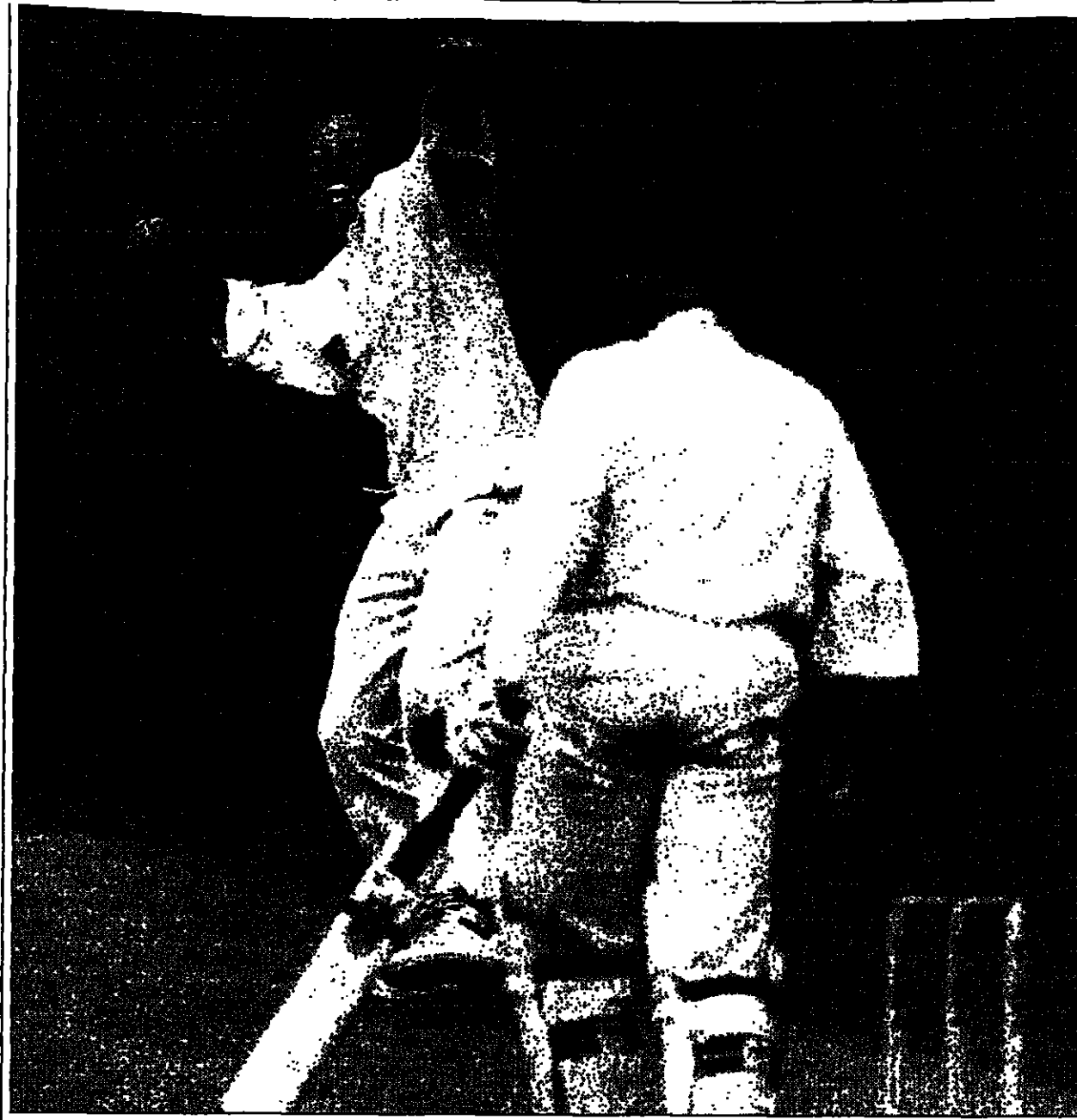
"The willing to be tested at any time," said Anton. "I want the IAAF to introduce blood tests. The problem is that the rule must be for everyone, not just for those western countries it is easy for the IAAF to travel to."

Anton said he believed the wind on Sunday may have cost him the opportunity of breaking Belayneh Dinsamo's 10-year-old world record of 2:06:50 and called on organisers to modify the course.

But David Bedford, the international race director, said: "To cut out something like the Cutty Sark just because it would make the course faster would be a retrograde step for the race."

Both Anton and Ireland's Catharina McKiernan, the women's winner, looked fresh yesterday. Her victory in London, after Sonia O'Sullivan's double triumph in the World Cross-Country Championships last month, completed a fantastic few weeks for Irish distance running.

● The International Olympic Committee has banned social drugs such as marijuana, crack, heroin and ecstasy after the Canadian snowboarder Ross Rebagliati kept his gold medal at the Winter Games in February despite testing positive for marijuana.



Uncocked... Chris Silverwood celebrates after trapping the Derbyshire captain Ibw

PHOTOGRAPH: LAURENCE GRIFFITHS

Yorkshire v Derbyshire

Silverwood sparkles

David Hopps at Headingley

CHIDE not that April is not yet out, all God-fearing Yorkshire folk will be tuning in to the Yorkshire v Derbyshire match on Saturday night in the trusting expectation of an overnight declaration. Instead Yorkshire scored another 19, leaving the target to 322 in 91 overs. "I won't be doing that again," Cork griped.

Yorkshire's quartet of seamers can rival Leicestershire's for potency. Their batting has also been strengthened by the emergence of Matthew Wood, 21, whose

compact first-innings century forged a winning position. Protests to Lord's about two home games in April have presumably been withdrawn.

Chris Silverwood's compelling form is proof that, if you must have an inactive winter, there are few better places than the Caribbean. Four wickets yesterday brought match figures of nine for 80. Michael May and Tim Twaits had been despatched with the new ball; Barnett's spirited 88 ended with an undisturbed outshot.

Rollins, caught hooking on 63, became the latest batsman to confirm the surprising pace of Craig White's bouncer in a post-lunch burst of three wickets in 10 balls. Matthew Cassar, lbw second ball, concluded the same about his yorker.

The growing belligerence of Darren Gough, his hamstring worries diminishing, will hearten England. He has some progress to make but rounded things off by bowling Andrew Harris. He has always liked having the last word.

Durham hopes die as Walsh topples top and tail

CCOURTNEY WALSH took six for 42 yesterday as Gloucestershire, despite a century from Ian Smith, beat Durham by 46 runs at Chester-le-Street.

After the visitors declared their second innings on 103 for six, setting Durham a victory target of 248, Walsh took three for 18 in nine overs as they stumped

to 42 for four and he returned to wrap up the tail as Durham reached 201.

In draws elsewhere Sussex's Chris Adams followed his first-innings 135 with 105 against Essex and David Leatherdale scored 99 for Worcestershire against Leicestershire at Grace Road.

Rain ruled out a finish

between Somerset and Nottinghamshire at Taunton and Hampshire, despite a century from Ian Smith, from 21 overs, held on against Northamptonshire at Southampton.

The sun shone at Old Trafford, but the ground was so wet there was no play between Lancashire and Middlesex.

Scoreboard

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Derbyshire: 2nd Innings 186 (P Fulton 100; Butcher 3-50)	
Gloucestershire: 2nd Innings 186 (P Fulton 100; Butcher 3-50)	
Gloucestershire v Derbyshire	
Gloucestershire: 1st Innings 186 (P Fulton 100; Butcher 3-50)	
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Derbyshire v Gloucestershire	
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Henman rallies to win in Munich, page 14
Surrey power to innings victory, page 15

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South African rugby tours in peril, page 15

SportsGuardian

Palace bow to the inevitable relegation

Premiership: Crystal Palace 0 Manchester United 3

United keep up the chase

David Lacey

AT LEAST the Premier League championship will not fall into Arsenal's lap, not quite. Manchester United's victory at Selhurst Park last night ensured that Highbury would not be celebrating before Sunday at the earliest. The result also sent Crystal Palace down.

Goals from Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt during a first half which saw Palace overrun by the speed of United's passing and movement all but settled the contest. Andy Cole's third, a tap-in late on after Kevin Miller blocked a Scholes shot, was unnecessary. Now Arsenal will be champions if they win their home matches against Derby County tomorrow and Everton four days later.

Last night found both sides clutching at straws, with a draw of no use to either. Anything but a victory for United would leave Arsenal on the championship threshold while Crystal Palace knew that failure to win would see them relegated for the third time in six years.

Any home optimism was short-lived. No sooner had United found their rhythm than they took the lead in the sixth minute. Following Schmeichel's long clearance, Teddy Sheringham and Cole split the defence with a couple of brisk, intuitive passes, leaving Scholes to beat Miller. Crystal Palace's response was to redouble their attacking efforts and hang the consequences. Marcus Bent's pace was testing Phil Neville, playing at right-back instead of his unfit brother Gary, and in the 17th minute Neil Shipperley drove the ball wide after Sasa Curcic, running at a retreating defence, had put him through.

In the meantime an astutely angled pass from David Beckham on the right had found



Going down... Palace's Sasa Curcic falls under the challenge of Paul Scholes, scorer of United's first goal at Selhurst Park last night. NERAN DOHERTY

Ryan Giggs running free into the penalty area from the left. If the Welshman had not slipped in the act of shooting, United would almost certainly have increased their lead then.

Not that they had to wait long. After 21 minutes Cole's pass was inadvertently touched on to Nicky Butt by

Marc Edworthy and the United midfielder drove a low shot beyond the reach of Miller. With Butt and Scholes doing much as they liked in midfield, and Beckham and Giggs enjoying the freedom of the wings, the scoring was unlikely to end there. Beckham emphasised the point just before the half-hour

with a shot that Miller did well to push wide. Soon after this Scholes sent in Giggs, who missed the target when he should have scored.

All that stopped United at least doubling their lead by half-time was their own proficiency. Against that Shipperley, Michele Padovano and Attilio Lombardo all wasted

chances for Palace with wayward shooting.

Important though the game was, the evening had an almost festive air, with neither team over-concerned about tight marking at the back. The difference was that United knew they could score almost at their leisure.

Nevertheless Palace did enjoy a spell of attacking pressure early in the second half which had United clearing their lines rather more urgently than hitherto. Palace's problem throughout was that the moment United regained possession they were completely exposed.

The truth was that, bravely though Palace attacked, taking on Manchester United with a thin defence and non-tackling midfield was akin to going to sea in a sieve. Last night they appeared set on going down with all hands while providing a fireworks display at the same time.

Certainly they should have scored in the 68th minute when Schmeichel failed to hold the shot from Dean Gordon that followed Lombardo's

tapped indirect free-kick. Shipperley was quick to pounce on the loose ball but lifted his shot over the bar.

Crystal Palace (4-4-2): Miller, Smith, Iannell, Edworthy, Gordon, Lombardo, (Irwin, 80min, Brown, 80min, 82), Curcic, Bent, Shipperley, Padovano (Dyer, 75).

Manchester United (4-4-2): Schmeichel, P. Neville, May, Pallister, Irwin (Clegg, 75), Beckham, Butt, Scholes, Giggs, Sheringham, Cole.

Referee: P. Jones (Loughborough).

Premiership

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
Arsenal	34	21	9	4	63	28	72	35
Man Utd	33	21	8	4	58	27	71	31
Chelsea	33	19	3	11	53	35	60	18
Liverpool	33	16	11	6	50	41	59	9
Blackburn	33	17	12	4	56	42	58	14
Sheff Wed	33	14	10	9	50	50	52	0
West Ham	33	15	13	5	48	45	52	3
Aston Villa	33	14	10	9	50	50	52	0
Leicester	33	12	10	11	47	37	49	10
Derby	33	14	7	12	45	44	49	1
Coventry	33	11	14	8	42	47	47	5
Southampton	33	14	9	10	42	52	47	-3
Nottingham	33	11	14	8	42	47	47	5
Wimbledon	33	10	13	10	39	42	42	-8
Newcastle	33	10	10	13	32	42	40	-10
Tottenham	33	10	10	13	37	50	40	-13
Barnsley	33	10	10	13	37	50	40	-13
Sheff Utd	33	9	12	12	40	51	39	-11
Bolton	33	8	13	12	36	57	37	-21
Barnsley	33	10	10	13	37	50	40	-13
G. Palace	33	7	8	22	31	65	28	-32

REMAINING MATCHES:
 Arsenal v Liverpool (H), May 3; Everton (H);
 6 Liverpool (A); 10 Aston Villa (A);
 Manchester United v Tottenham (H);
 May 4; Leeds (H); 10 Barnsley (A).

French flair wasted on the French



Jim White

ACROSS English league football the largest contingent of foreign players comes from Australia. There are Aussies everywhere, mainly at Portsmouth. Then come the Norwegians. Thanks to Tore Andre Stig Inge and Ole Gunnar, there are more double-barrelled names in Premiership dressing-rooms than at the Queen Charlotte's Ball.

But though its natives may be statistically under-represented in the English game, there is no doubt from which country a club should recruit if it wishes to win the title. Barring the kind of comic catastrophe unheard of beyond Maine Road, the championship is heading for Highbury. Which means that for five of the past six seasons the biggest prize in English football will have gone to teams with Frenchmen at their core.

When Arsenal stuttered back in December many commentators mocked Arsene Wenger's overseas recruits as a rag-bag of mercenaries not equipped for the title race. Why, we wondered, had he bought in expensive foreign youngsters to fall when there must be plenty of equally inadequate talent on his doorstep?

Christopher Wreh, we sniggered as he fell over in front of goal, should go back to his chain of fancy lighting shops. That Wenger has been able to prove his critics wrong is thanks largely to the two Frenchmen at the heart of his side, Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit, who have provided the kind of tough-tackling, hard-running, leather-lunged midfield power that is needed to win the title. Plus they can pass the ball a bit.

This is the kind of thing an injury-free Roy Keane supplies to Manchester United, the sort of qualities Liverpool hoped Paul Ince would offer when they signed him. For all the trickery of Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars up front, or the parsimony of Tony Adams and his arm-raising cohorts at the back, it is this pair of Gallic workhorses who look like winning it for the Gunners.

Up the road from Highbury another Frenchman has been excelling in England. Without David Ginola, the only player to rise above the cloying mal-

aise of White Hart Lane, Tottenham would have been dead, buried and relegated weeks ago. His performance on Saturday extracted only the faintest praise from his coach, a Swiss who increasingly seems wedded to all the worst traits of the English sergeant-major school of football management. For the rest of us watching, it was a magnificent display from a player capable not only of kicking with two feet but of wearing two haircuts simultaneously.

Link Spurs and Arsenal: give Ginola the opportunity to feed off passes supplied by Vieira and Petit, add the young Nicolas Anelka up front and France could field a formidable side for the World Cup. Except that the noises coming from the coach, Alime Jacquet suggest that Ginola and Petit's France 98 claims will be ignored and only bit-parts will be offered to Vieira and Anelka.

Which leads to one of two conclusions: for a quartet like that to be left at the back of the queue, either the French reckon that dominating the English Premiership is no mark of quality or, more ominously, there is a crocodile of talent lining up across France.

Yet when last week I asked a leading football pundit who he thought would win France 98, the hosts didn't get a mention. "Brazil," he said. "And if not Brazil, Germany, Italy or Argentina. England have a chance if Shearer stays fit."

What about France? "Pah," he said. And he is French. Across the Channel preparations continue at speed for the kick-off. Most cities are full of boastful road signs about how successful and hospitable they are, shops are chockers with taste-free memorabilia, every native with any where his critics wrong is snapping up tickets in order to sell them on at a profit to those who want them.

THE whole operation appears to be viewed as a one-off economic opportunity (business school speak for a killing) rather than as a chance to show the rest of the world that French football is best. Indeed, in the most convolutedly post-modern of television commercials a bunch of French players can be seen on the boxes of the nation telling everyone they have no chance of winning the trophy and that the booing should start now.

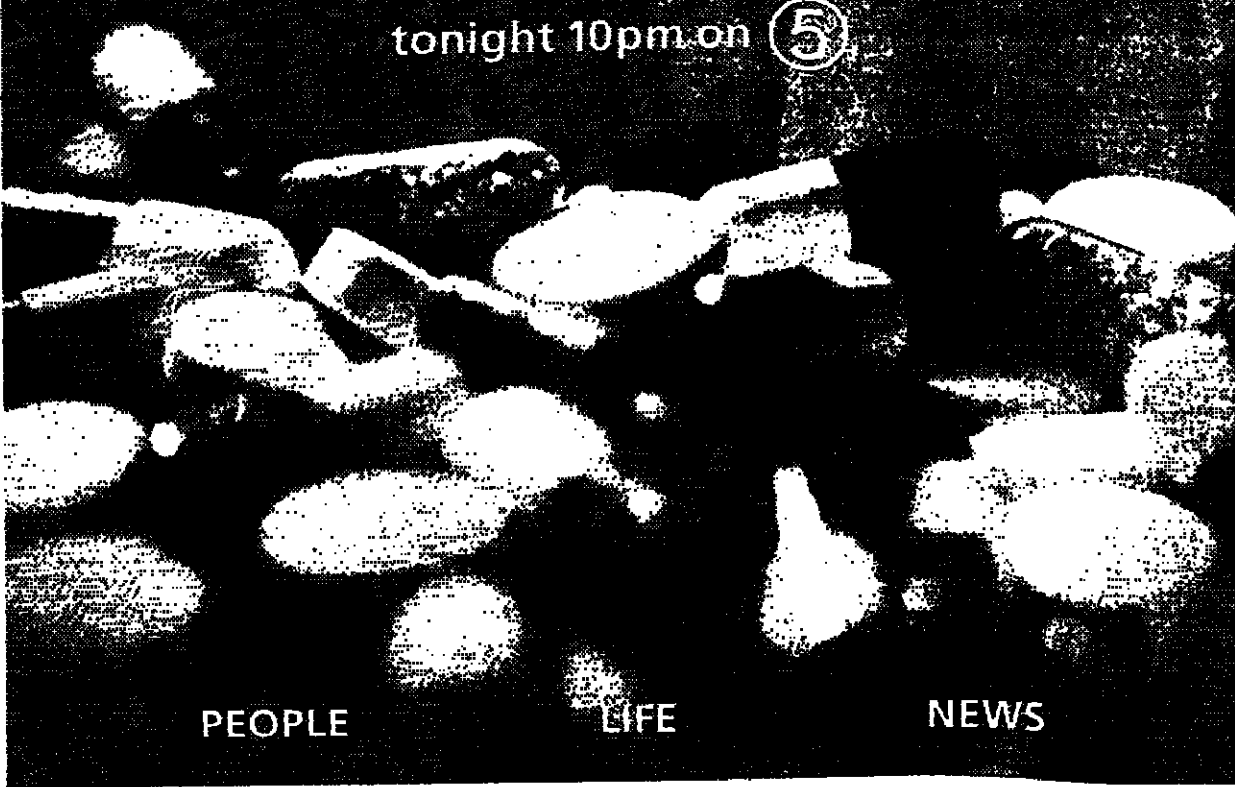
Apparently this is intended to spark the locals into support. In England we know better. William Hill places France as second favourites behind Brazil. Punters over here have seen what the French connection has done for Arsenal.

5 facts

about Britain's drug habit

- 1 the British are the biggest consumers of legal drugs in Europe
- 2 the prescription of antidepressants has risen by 60% in the last five years
- 3 ecstasy and prozac are taken by roughly the same number of people each week
- 4 alcohol and nicotine are more addictive than either LSD or ecstasy
- 5 over 200 people in Britain die every year from paracetamol misuse

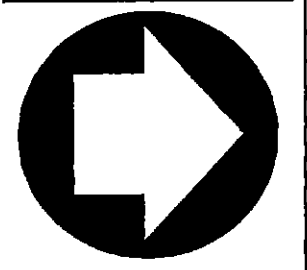
DRUGS ARE US
 tonight 10pm on 5



PEOPLE

LIFE

NEWS

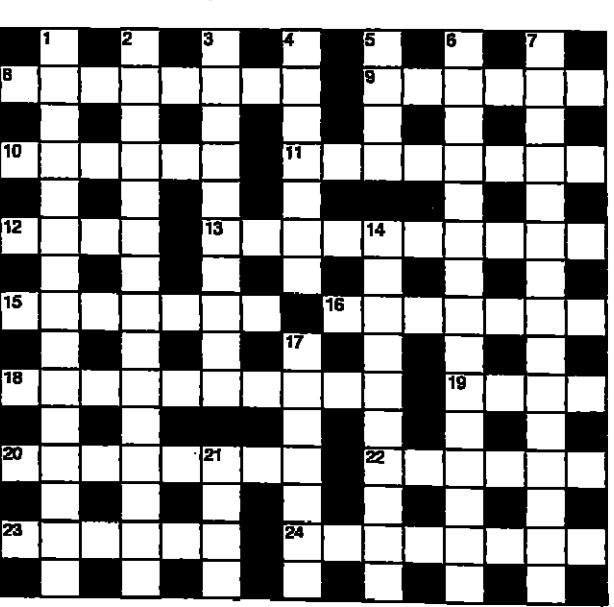


What we have now is a bizarre reversal - women powerful outside the home, yet bound by male convention in the bedroom.
 Linda Grant

G2
 page 7

Guardian Crossword No 21,260

Set by Mercury



Across

- 1 Royal on a trip to a famous loch (8)
- 2 The grease in the bottom got very hot (6)
- 3 Note a singer heard (6)
- 4 Replacing it deny it shows individuality (8)
- 5 Girl conceals love for current collector (4)
- 6 Prizes left on a wet blanket (10)
- 7 It's silver and circular on the bottom (7)
- 8 Unidentified junk now normally concealed (7)
- 9 I'm left nursing public image that's cold (10)
- 10 Having soft ice-cream around is impressive (4)
- 11 Bachelor, 50, right for a royal residence (8)

Down

- 1 Disclose secret and lose the match? (4,3,4,4)
- 2 Alterations finished, incoming egghead had second thoughts (7,4,4)
- 3 Stands for, and offers to follow, soldiers (10)
- 4 Is smoke bad for people from Greenland? (7)
- 5 Sailor not in line to become expert (4)
- 6 LP helping to make a little money? (5,5,5)
- 7 Throw her a pair to change

into where travellers gather (8,7)

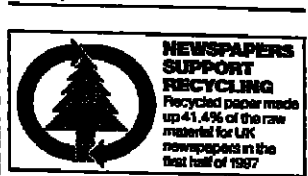
14 Eg Mediterranean seal came ashore without (4-6)

17 Half open and hold (7)

21 Clear Exmouth front to sit on (4)

Solution tomorrow

22 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 333 238. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATIS.



Wednesday April 29

Interview with the
Alice Walker
 ease with
 contradic
 62 with Europe

Wolfe's
 vanity
 deal
 ignites
 media
 bonfire

Anna Coles in New York

The New York literary world was watching with interest as...

Barrie

Barrie

Inside
 This
 than

صلى الله عليه وسلم